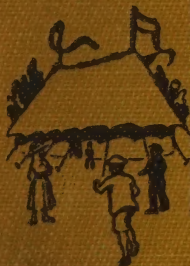
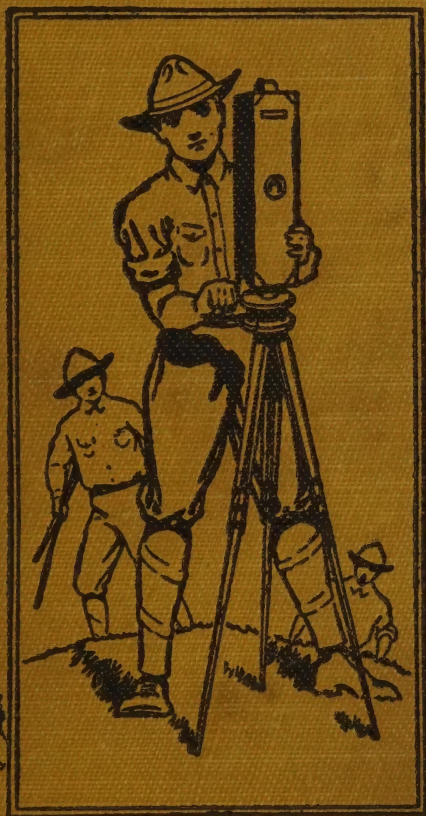


*The*  
MOVING-PICTURE  
COMRADES'  
ALONG THE ORINOCO



ELMER TRACEY BARNES

Clifford Culley



















*The object swung to and fro.*



# THE MOVING PICTURE COMRADES ALONG THE ORINOCO

OR

FACING PERILS IN THE TROPICS

BY

ELMER TRACEY BARNES



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# THE MOTION PICTURE COMRADES ALONG THE ORINOCO

## CHAPTER I

### DOWN THERE IN PANAMA

"THIS makes the fourth day, recollect, boys, since we said good-bye, and *bon voyage* to Captain Barnaby Shooks and his diving-boat, *Argonaut!*"

"Yes, and they've passed all the way through the canal long before now. Barring accidents, they must be a whole day's journey from Colon, and booming northeast through the Gulf of Mexico, bound for good old Baltimore."

"Shucks! that's what I call hard luck, fellows! We thought to take it easier waiting here at Panama for that Hawaiian steamer due tomorrow, when we might have been well on our way home right now."

"But we all agreed, you remember, Ballyhoo, that life aboard a submarine craft got mighty monotonous. Besides, you kept bumping that

poor head of yours so often against the low ceiling in the cubbyhole of a saloon where we dined that Jack and myself began to be afraid for your brains."

"Small loss if they had run out, Oscar. Anyhow, such a thing would have proved that I *did* possess a few; and some folks I've known in old Melancton, where we all live, used to say they believed my skull contained only a horrible vacuum."

"Besides," continued the serious looking young fellow answering to the name of Jack, "we took so many splendid motion pictures of submarine life, away down at the bottom of the sea, that my supply of films had about run out; though for that matter we found the second lot waiting for us here when we arrived."

These three enterprising young chaps were walking leisurely along a street in Panama while chattering at such a lively rate. As some of my readers may not fully understand the subject of their conversation, it seems advisable to introduce Oscar and his comrades before going any further.

Oscar Farrar, Jack Anderson and "Ballyhoo" Jones, otherwise Jonathan Edwards Jones, were chums who had latterly seen a number of remarkable episodes, as have been set forth at length in the three preceding volumes of this Series, to which the reader who desires to know the full particulars is referred.

They all lived in the town of Melancton, situ-



ated in the Eastern part of the United States. Oscar's guardian was named Doctor Felix Clements. The boy had been left quite a fortune, and as he showed a disposition to use due care in spending his money, he was allowed great latitude by the genial old physician, whose one hope was that Oscar would eventually follow his own beloved profession.

"Ballyhoo" Jones had come by his queer nickname through being gifted with a high order of mimicry. His ability to imitate a whole menagerie, as well as the barkers who shout at the entrances to the side shows, soon caused his numerous boy friends to look upon him as associated in some way with a circus; so they commenced calling him "Barker," and finally this changed into "Ballyhoo," which in stroller language means the same thing.

Jack Anderson was possessed of a single yearning, which was to produce such remarkable motion pictures of strange things seldom dreamed of by ordinary people, that they would create a sensation. His father had been an artist along similar lines, and was lost for several years in the heart of Africa; but rescued in a most peculiar and thrilling manner by Oscar and his two chums, as related in an earlier book.\*

Their latest project had been along remarkable lines, since it took them aboard a submarine built

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"The Motion Picture Comrades through African Jungles."

by a company to visit the scenes of various wrecks, both ancient and modern, with the object of trying to salvage the valuable cargoes and treasure that had been lost in the depths of the sea.

Their experiences had satisfied the three comrades, and rather than continue on board the submarine, with its cramped quarters, they had decided to stay over at Panama, seeing some of the strange things of the Canal Zone. Then in good time they figured on going North aboard a steamship, having a letter to the captain from one of the head men of the Line that would procure them accommodations, since passengers were not as a rule carried on the Hawaiian steamers.

So here they were, spending the time prowling around hot Panama, and taking in the sights.

Jack had secured so many completed films of the wonders of the deep that he was feeling very happy, and anticipated receiving hearty congratulations from the president of the mammoth company with whom they had contracted to deliver the results of their latest enterprise.

Already the first series, comprising thrilling circus pictures, had made quite a hit with the theatre-going public; and before they left home the success of the African pictures seemed more than assured; so that Jack's opinion as to what constituted a really remarkable film appeared to be based on a secure foundation.

By now they had exhausted the pleasures of Panama. Sights that had appealed to them in the beginning now palled on their taste; and they be-

gan to yearn for the more bracing atmosphere of their Northern home.

Then something happened that like magic changed all their plans, and brought the Motion Picture Comrades face to face with an alluring proposition that tempted them amazingly.

As they sauntered up to the hotel that day they saw a strange face at the door. Ballyhoo had casually mentioned the fact that he understood a certain Professor Yardley had arrived on the steamer that morning, and expected to spend a number of months deep in the forests of Venezuela searching for rare plants, especially along the orchid line.

They immediately guessed that this gentleman must be the professor, for he wore glasses, and looked the part. To their surprise he smiled, and held out his hand.

"Which one of you boys happens to be Jack Anderson?" he asked. "I know an uncle of yours in Washington very well, and heard considerable about the great stunts you and your two chums were pulling off in the line of remarkable motion pictures. When I learned that you were right here in Panama I told myself I would make your acquaintance, if I had to stay over another boat."

Of course that caused Jack and the other two more or less satisfaction; for it is always nice to be appreciated; and especially when the one who says kind words has made a reputation in the world of science second to none.

So they all sat down in the reading room of



the hotel, and, being coaxed to tell some of the things they had seen and endured since commencing this business of picture taking, in due time the professor was put in possession of innumerable incidents. Ballyhoo in particular excelled all records in reeling off some of the queer things that had befallen them.

They liked Professor Yardley from the very start. He possessed a personality that drew people to him. Ballyhoo told himself before they had known the other ten minutes that he would like to spend a month in camp with a man whose wide knowledge of all animated nature afforded him such a foundation for relating interesting and thrilling incidents connected with his own life work.

In the midst of their chat the professor suddenly beckoned to a young man who had entered the place.

"I want you to know," he told Oscar and the others, "my companion and fellow worker on this expedition, Philip Jenks, a relative of one of the greatest authorities on natural history and ornithology this country has ever produced. Philip, these fine young fellows are Oscar Farrar, Jack Anderson and—excuse me for taking liberties, but it comes so natural to say it—Ballyhoo Jones, the boys of whom I was telling you on the steamer."

Young Jenks was undoubtedly greatly pleased to know them, if his hearty handshake meant anything. On their part, the three chums realized that he was no common young fellow, but an ear-

nest student; and, if he had any of the famous Jenks' blood in his veins, possessed of an overpowering ambition to equal his uncle's reputation as an authority on birds.

"You see, we make a very evenly balanced team," Professor Yardley went on to say. "I'm meaning to devote my whole time to plants, while Philip expects to search for several new and unknown species of feathered life, which it is suspected will be found deep in the forests of Venezuela. Professor Frank Chapman has spent much time studying bird life in this region, and the glowing reports he brought home with him have been the main reason for our being dispatched on another expedition."

This was all mighty interesting to the chums. They themselves had been through a certain amount of experience along the line of venturing into almost unknown regions, and consequently could appreciate what lay before these two ambitious scientific gentlemen.

"It's plain that you expect to have a wonderful trip of it, Professor," Oscar told the elder gentleman after they had listened to dozens of things the adventurous pair had laid out to do; in imagination seeing them passing day after day up the rivers, with their weird tropical foliage, and past forests populated by strange animal denizens, until the picture thus painted looked very alluring.

"Yes," added Jack, heaving a sigh; "some of these fine days I'm hoping I may have a chance to go on just such a cruise as that, and take pictures

of the wonders of the tropical woods, just as we did in Africa. We thought when we got home from the Dark Continent we'd seen enough of that sort of thing; but I often look back on those days with envy."

Professor Yardley gave Philip Jenks a quick look and a smile. Then turning upon the three boys he went on to say deliberately:

"Well, you'll never have a better opportunity to gratify that longing than now; for we'd be delighted to have the three of you join our party!"



## CHAPTER II

### THE TEMPTING BAIT

BALLYHOO JONES caught his breath, while his eyes glistened with a suddenly aroused hope. Jack, too, stared as though he had received a shock; while Oscar's face betrayed the fact that the idea so suddenly held dangling like a prize before them also gave him a certain amount of genuine pleasure.

"Oscar, let's say yes!" exclaimed Ballyhoo, with his customary impulsiveness.

"Perhaps we could manage it," Jack added; "and, anyway, thank goodness that extra lot of special films got here safe and sound. Only for that I would be left in the lurch."

"You see, Oscar," ventured the professor, who had discovered long since that the Farrar boy was in reality the leader of the trio, whose opinion carried great weight, "both your chums seem to take kindly to my proposition. Please weigh it well, and if you can see your way clear to accepting, Philip and myself will be simply delighted to have such jolly companions with us."

Oscar appeared willing at least to talk it over, and that opened the flood-gates of oratory. Both

the scientific gentlemen began again to tell of the fascinating things they anticipated running across, and what magnificent pictures Jack could secure that would pay him for the time and expense a hundredfold.

"Of course," the young photographer went on to say, as though figuring it out how he expected to surmount what few obstacles might rise up to confront them, "I could send my submarine films through to the Company in charge of the captain of the steamer. That letter would make him our friend, right enough, and he'd see that they got safely in the hands of the president. So that much needn't stop us."

Oscar laughed.

"It begins to look as though a majority is against me in the very start!" he exclaimed. "But let's go slow about this until we figure things out. We would have to cable to our folks what we were meaning to do, and also write the particulars so they'd know where we were. That much for a beginning."

By now both Jack and Ballyhoo were growing enthusiastic; and it may be easily understood that the professor and Philip Jenks egged them on whenever they saw an opportunity to put in a good word, or give a sly shove.

"We expected to be gone several months when we started out this time," Ballyhoo was saying, "and because our work with the old submersible wound up so much sooner than any of us thought possible is no reason why we have to put for home

in a big hurry. We're entitled to a long vacation; and somehow I've always wanted to hunt a jaguar, and see what a tapir looked like. Oscar, is there any *real* good reason why we shouldn't say yes?"

"If you put it at me that way, Ballyhoo, I've got to admit there isn't," the other told him.

At that Ballyhoo jumped to his feet and acted as though ready to dance a hornpipe, only he suddenly remembered where he was, and that his actions might draw a crowd.

Carried along with the tide, Oscar decided that there was no use trying to resist the temptation by which they were beset. So he turned to Professor Yardley and held out his hand.

"If suitable arrangements can be made, so that we will not be crowding you too much, Professor, I don't see why we shouldn't go along with you, and see with our own eyes some of the interesting sights you've been telling us about, since this makes your fifth visit to South American wilds."

After dinner had been dispatched they talked matters over again, and many things were arranged. The professor agreed to post the boys as to what they should lay in, with regard to supplies of clothing, and such comforts as are always carried by up-to-date parties venturing into a wilderness where stores are an unknown quantity.

Fortunately the boys were bountifully supplied with funds, because they had found few opportunities for spending a great deal since leav-



ing home. Indeed, the man of science gladly agreed to purchase the things they would need, and have them sent to the hotel to be packed that evening; for the small steamer upon which he and Philip Jenks meant to start for the Venezuela coast town was to leave Colon on the following day.

"We might as well start into this business with a rush," laughed Oscar. "When once you've decided to do a certain thing, what's the use of making two bites to a cherry? I'm only laughing to see how easy it is to find excuses when you've set your heart on a thing."

"Everything goes!" sang out Ballyhoo. "I'm meaning to lay in more ammunition for our repeating rifle the first thing. You see, we didn't really expect to make much use of firearms aboard a diving-boat, and so we fetched only a belt of cartridges. But now the case is different, and I must look out we've got enough to get us all the game we want for grub."

"I carry a rifle with me," said Professor Yardley, "and Philip of course depends on his small-bore double-barrel shotgun to get his bird specimens. But you are wise to lay in a stock of ammunition. It is sometimes greatly needed on these explorations into South American wilds, where even experienced travelers are likely to get temporarily lost."

Even talk like this did not have any dampening effect on the enthusiasm of the Motion Picture Comrades. Ballyhoo had a settled habit of never

worrying about the future so long as the present looked pleasant; and as for Jack, he was already beginning to see glorious visions of new worlds to conquer in the line of bewildering films that would be stamped with approval by a critical public.

They soon started forth to carry their plans through. Jack had his precious films securely wrapped so that they could stand much rough usage without being injured. He expected to hand them personally to the commander of the big American-Hawaiian steamer, which was really due at some time during the coming night, but would not start through the canal until noon of the following day.

The cablegram was sent off, and letters would follow, fully explaining the reason for their abrupt change of programme. Doctor Clement would see that Jack's folks and the Jones family were duly notified that lengthy letters were on the way, also how they were sending the under-the-sea sets of motion pictures.

All went like clock-work, as Ballyhoo remarked more than once. He was fairly bubbling with delight over the prospect of seeing some big game again. When, however, Jack chanced to tell him that there was also a member of the boa constrictor snake family known by the name of anaconda in South America, some of which were said to measure forty feet in length, the Jones boy gave a little gasp, and looked a trifle pale; for he had been a witness to the constricting power of such

hideous reptiles, and carried the horrible picture in his mind to that day.\*

"We had made arrangements for two long canoes to take us up the river, with our luggage and camp followers," the professor told them that evening at supper; "but it will be little trouble to engage another boat, with a crew of Indian rowers. You see, we have quite an amount of stuff to carry along connected with our business. I expect to secure a vast quantity of orchids and other rare plants to bring back; and Philip here will undoubtedly have stacks of birdskins, to be later on mounted for the National Museum at Washington, by whom we are both sent out."

"So far as that goes," said generous Oscar, "what's to hinder us from engaging *two* extra canoes for our share of the trip. The money part of it doesn't cut any figure with us; and we want to be comfortable. We had almost fifty in our party at one time out in Africa, because every pound had to be carried on the heads of our porters."

"I heard about those pictures just before leaving Washington," continued Professor Yardley, "and fully meant seeing them, but a hurry call from the Department sent me off before the time appointed. I shall give myself the pleasure of looking them up as soon as I get back home. And certainly I shall enjoy them ten times more after

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"The Motion Picture Comrades through African Jungles"



having the participants at my campfire for so many weeks."

He had seen to every little detail necessary, and the things purchased having been delivered at the hotel, they meant to pack before retiring that night. Oscar was struck with the exactness shown in all these little things. He afterwards discovered how a man of science, accustomed to risking his life in all sorts of queer corners of the globe, must of necessity learn to be *thorough* in everything he undertakes, no matter how trivial it may appear; for his very existence may depend on the reliability of a rope, or the material of which a paddle is composed.

Very likely the boys did not sleep quite as sound as usual that night. It was not on account of the warmth of their big room, either, nor yet the fact that a few voracious mosquitoes had managed to gain access to the apartment through a hole in the window screen. The future that beckoned with rosy fingers possessed an attraction in its very novelty that caused endless thoughts to pass in review through their brains, and this condition was not conducive to sleep.

So morning found them. Jack quickly discovered that the big steamer had arrived, and straightway, after an early breakfast, he and his chums posted off to get aboard and meet the captain. This courteous gentleman, upon learning from Jack's letter just who and what they were, accorded them an interview, and asked nearly a thousand questions concerning their previous ad-

ventures. Even the commander of an ocean steamer may have a deep-seated love for thrilling situations and daring ventures, and yearn to know how such young fellows as Osear and his comrades could have accomplished all they had marked up to their credit.

Of course he readily promised to take very good care of the package of films Jack gave into his hands; and assured the anxious photographer that they would be placed in the charge of the president of the great Film Company, if he had to make it a personal affair on his arrival at New York City.

This load off his mind, Jack became quite contented. He said it was like clearing the decks for action; as long as those reminders of past work continued to remain in his possession, he could not feel satisfied to start out on any new business.

It was found that the small trading steamer on which they had taken passage was scheduled to leave Colon on the following morning at nine o'clock. This meant that they would have to cross the isthmus by train that afternoon, and spend the main part of the night in Colon, a programme that pleased the boys quite as well, since they had grown tired of Panama itself.

They saw that all their stuff was aboard before taking their seats themselves; for any mistake in this quarter would delay matters. Professor Yardley had only come across the isthmus to secure certain things which he had left there

on the previous season when returning home after six months in Peru among the lofty Andes.

All went well, and they reached Colon in safety. On the following morning they saw their possessions put aboard the steamer, and along toward ten o'clock the coasting vessel was well on her way, bearing the expedition toward their intended destination.



## CHAPTER III

### IN A VENEZUELA FOREST

Two weeks later those whom we saw meet so strangely in Panama might have been discovered far up a river in Northern Venezuela, with quite a flotilla of queer-looking native boats, each manned by a number of lusty Indian rowers. Seated in the shade under the awnings that kept off the sun's heated rays were the three boys and their new friends, Professor Yardley and Philip Jenks.

They had met with the customary number of delays, but thanks to the patience and untiring ability of the veteran organizer of exploring expeditions all troubles of this nature had at length been brushed aside; and finally the start was made. They were now almost a week on the way, and rapidly getting into a most interesting section of the country.

When they learned they were heading for the country of the famous Orinoco River, that drains such an enormous territory, and that they did not expect to have to make a "carry" with their boats and cargoes, the boys were at a loss to understand it.

"Why, how can that be," Ballyhoo Jones had asked. "As near as I can remember from studying geography the great Orinoco empties into the Atlantic Ocean some three hundred miles or more to the east of here. I also know that it's got lots of mouths, like the Nile, only more so, and they're scattered over a whopping big country; but this river we're ascending from the sea right now can hardly be one of those."

"In one way you're right," the professor had told him, "because at certain seasons of the year this river flows normally northward into the sea; but during, and for a time after, the rainy season the whole country is partly overflowed, and at such a time one can paddle all the way from the Gulf to the Orinoco. In fact, this river flows both ways, paradoxical though that may seem."

Oscar remembered reading about such a thing, though never anticipating that he would see it for himself. They had already witnessed plenty of interesting sights, and Jack had even started to work with his camera, getting the flotilla, some of the camps, and certain stretches of the river that appealed to him as well worth the effort, showing what a rank growth of vegetation those humid South American wilds afforded.

Each of the boys sported a real machete, which they meant to carry with them at all times. Indeed, except for the assistance of this long heavy knife used by Cubans, Malays and most people of the tropics, it would be utterly impossible for any one to make his way through the tangled growth

of hanging vines and dense vegetation to be met with on every hand, so that a passage had often to be actually hewed out with lusty strokes right and left.

Ballyhoo seemed to never tire of watching the dusky fellows use the oars. He was reminded, when night time found them making camp on the shore, of other similar scenes in connection with their African venture, when those happy-go-lucky blacks used to sit around and chant their weird songs that had such a wild monotone. Only these Indians did not sing, or appear merry at any time. They were a serious lot, and only induced to undertake the job that was offered because they needed the money, and the food was far better than they could ever hope to enjoy if they stayed in their village hovels.

As for Ballyhoo himself, he was the life of the camp. His spirits seemed to be at the boiling point every night, no matter how exhausting the day's trip had been on account of the extreme heat and moisture. He would sing songs, dance in half a dozen ways, and perform antics that shamed the very monkeys they saw occasionally in the trees.

It was the delight of the boy's heart to mimic astonished simians, and get them to chattering with rage. Once he even infuriated an old gray-haired monkey up in a cocoanut tree close to the river brink so that the other bombarded him with green nuts, which Ballyhoo neatly dodged, and then gravely thanked the hairy thrower for sending at his head, as that was just what he wanted.



So far not a murmur of complaint had been heard. The three comrades were delighted because they had decided to accompany the scientists on their trip. The professor, however, warned them against expecting things to continue after this fashion.

"This is only the preliminary stage of such a trip," he told them, "just as men who are about to engage in a prize fight first of all shake hands before starting to maul one another. The real work is yet to come, also the dangers and the privations; but we who are accustomed to such things think only of the reward awaiting us if we are persistent, faithful, and devoted to our profession."

Philip Jenks had spent more or less time on the lookout for new species of birds, nor did he hesitate at securing specimens of certain varieties which were needed to fill out cases in the National Museum at Washington.

Already he had put away several macaws and parakeets that came within the list of "wants," and he was also looking eagerly forward to the time when they would have arrived in the region where Professor Chapman had recommended they go.

No one had up to now met with any serious adventure. Ballyheo had seen a few of his pet aversions, snakes, but had not been forced to use his machete in order to defend himself against an attack.

Whenever he happened to walk in the forest he

kept his eyes always on the alert. Every swinging liana, dependent from some lofty limb overhead, had to undergo a close inspection before it passed muster. He had seen a great boa thus hang down and wait to throw its coils about an incautious deer; and Ballyhoo meant to avoid any such terrible experience if being on his guard could prevent it.

As a rule they camped early, though it would have been pleasant to do much of the voyaging in the cool of the evening. It was necessary, however, to choose the right sort of ground for the night's rest, because otherwise they might rue it.

On one occasion when they had been tempted to make a longer run than usual, and climbed ashore in the gloom of evening, they had hardly made camp than they found themselves attacked by ten million terrible ants that bit ferociously, and for a time almost threatened to force them to abandon their luggage.

After that they made a solemn vow not to yield to temptation again, but look for the right sort of ground while daylight held good. Besides, as is always the case in the tropics, there was hardly any twilight or gloaming. After the sun dropped out of sight it seemed as though night swept down upon them with a rush, just as if that might be the signal far and near for the shadows to swoop out of their hiding-places, and spread a sable mantle over the whole thick forest.

The sounds that came to them on those same nights were never to be forgotten, either. True,

as Ballyhoo said, the clamor did not begin to equal that which had assailed their ears in the African jungles; but all the same there were plenty of strange noises, and the boys had to ask many questions before they could identify the species of bird or animal from which these proceeded.

The huge ugly vampire bats gave Ballyhoo the most uneasiness. Once he had awakened in the dead of night, and by the light of the flickering camp fire discovered some weird shape fluttering above the hammock in which at the time he chanced to be lying. Then his horrified eyes discovered that the creature was an enormous bat with a wide sweep of wings, and that it was calmly engaged in sucking blood from one of his own bare feet that had chanced to be exposed.

Ballyhoo had given a whoop and a jump that frightened the terrible looking bat away; but after that he never went to sleep without guarding against a repetition of his experience. And many a vampire bat was doomed to fall before his gun before the expedition came to an end of its labors. Ballyhoo always declared they made him think of Satan, as he had seen the Evil One depicted in colors; and on that account alone he believed he was doing a good work in decimating the numbers of the ghastly imitators, which he called "blood-suckers."

On this particular day when we come upon them moving along the river with the measured strokes of the dusky Indian rowers, it had been decided to camp a little earlier even than customary. Philip



Jenks had discovered the presence of a bird in the vicinity that he was eager to possess; and as the main object of the whole enterprise was to accomplish just such ambitions, of course comfort or progress must not be allowed to enter into their considerations.

So it came about that with the sun still a couple of hours high, the boats were, at a signal from the headman in charge, who took his orders direct from Professor Yardley, turned in toward the shore, where a likely spot seemed to invite their scrutiny. After it was settled that this would make an admirable camp, preparations looking to that end were next in order.

Soon quite a bustling scene was being captured by Jack, busy turning the crank of his camera. The sunlight, falling on the picture, gave it a wonderfully pleasing aspect, and he did not believe he could ever improve on that opportunity to show how explorers in South American wilds clear the ground with their machetes, get their tents erected, spear fish in the river for supper, make fires, and in numerous ways prove themselves equal to the occasion.

Meanwhile Ballyhoo Jones had accepted the urgent invitation of Jenks to accompany him in a little turn around. The woods seemed somewhat more open than usual, so that they might expect to cover considerable territory before coming back. By always keeping the river on their left they would know which way to turn when ready to start for the camp again.

Some time afterwards they were at quite a little distance from the balance of the party. Ballyhoo, as usual, kept watching to see that no treacherous anaconda caught him in its swinging coils. As yet none of them had seen such a monster as had been described to the boys; though numerous water snakes, some of them quite terrifying as regards looks, had been noted during the cruise.

If those at the river camp were making any noise at all, it certainly did not penetrate so deep into the forest, for Ballyhoo noticed that the only sounds coming to his acute ears were such as might be expected to proceed from a Venezuela jungle—the whimpering of monkey babies, the harsh scolding of hairy mothers, or argumentative fathers; odd grunts which may have proceeded from some wandering tapir, though Ballyhoo was yet to see his first animal of this hog species, at least, in its native woods; the cries of various species of woodpeckers and other still more beautifully plumaged birds, and such things.

Then suddenly as they moved along Philip Jenks put his hand on the arm of his companion, bringing Ballyhoo to a pause. When the latter saw the bird hunter pointing ahead, and in various ways indicating that silence just then might be worth while cultivating, it can be set down as certain that the boy stared in that direction with his heart commencing to beat like a trip-hammer.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BLOW-GUN BIRD HUNTER

WHAT Ballyhoo Jones saw thrilled him to the core. It was no monstrous snake waiting to cast its coils about an unsuspecting victim; nor yet a slinking jaguar endeavoring to pounce upon its intended dinner. Instead, the boy discovered a human figure creeping silently through the growth of tropical plants and vegetation, ever and anon stooping over, and constantly displaying a wonderful knowledge of woodcraft while passing along.

It was a wild Indian, almost naked, and with long black hair that gave him a peculiarly fiendish appearance. Apparently the native did not suspect the presence of whites nearby, being wholly engrossed with creeping closer upon some object that he meant to bring down after his own peculiar fashion.

"See what he's got in his hands," whispered Jenks in the other's ear.

Ballyhoo had already noticed the long reed-like affair, bound securely with some species of native cloth, as though to render it still more im-

pervious to the admittance of air, save at either end. It must have been all of five or six feet long, Ballyhoo reckoned.

"A blow-gun?" his lips framed, though never a sound was emitted, probably in fear of being incautious, and attracting the attention of the wild Indian.

Jenks just nodded his head, which satisfied the boy, who again glued his eyes on the form of the creeper, bent upon seeing what use he meant to make of his singular weapon. Ballyhoo had read of these things, and that the Indians of the Orinoco, as well as along certain tributaries of the mighty Amazon, are wonderfully expert in sending out their little darts to a distance that would seem almost impossible, and with incredible accuracy.

He found himself all in a shiver, not of fear, but rather expectancy. At the same time it did strike Ballyhoo that some accounts stated how these nomads of the dense South American forests were in the habit of dipping the tiny points of their arrows in some poison, which they secured from adders, or other deadly snakes.

"Look beyond, and see what he's after," came again in a whisper in Ballyhoo's ear.

He had no trouble in seeing. Up there far above the ground in a lofty tree something gorgeous attracted his eye. It was a bird, and not of the common macaw or parakeet species, either, but with beautiful tail feathers that grew to an astonishing length. Ballyhoo guessed that if there were



Birds of Paradise in those forests between the coast and the Orinoco, he was looking at one just then.

It also struck him that young Jenks must have some such glorious bird in mind when he started out on this very tramp around the river camp. And now to think that they should come upon a magnificent specimen, with a native creeping up bent upon securing the bird for disposal to some Indian half-breed trader later on.

Still Ballyhoo was pleased with the thought that now he should see for himself whether those wonderful stories he had read concerning the expertness of these Indian hunters had any foundation in fact. And, strange as it may seem, he found himself wishing Oscar and Jack were only there at his side, so that they too might be witnesses to the spectacle—perhaps with Jack turning his crank, and filming the Indian in the act of using his blow-gun.

Now the hunter seemed to believe he had gained a position where the bird was within range, for they saw him thrust the long tube slowly upward until it was pointing directly toward that gay-plumaged object far above.

Ballyhoo plainly detected the Indian's cheeks puff out, just as a bugler might do when about to sound "taps" or the "reveille." Then came an odd sound. Ballyhoo could only liken it to a frog popping into the pool, or a cow's hoof sucking out of the mud.

He knew the dart had gone forth on its fateful

mission, and consequently immediately turned his eyes upward, just in time to see the bird with the beautiful plumage leave its perch spring into the air, attempt to fly away, and then, with one wing pinned to its side, come whirling downward in great circles, until it fell in the midst of a thicket of thorny Spanish bayonet, where it hung in plain sight.

Now was Philip's opportunity. He wanted that identical bird very much, and, saying a few words to Ballyhoo, so as to put him on his guard in case the native showed a disposition to turn his deadly blow-gun on them, the young naturalist started forward.

The native, hearing the crash of their approaching footsteps, whirled around. He looked greatly startled at seeing two whites hurrying toward him. Possibly he may never have before come into personal contact with a man with a white skin, at least he could not have had any reason to believe them friends.

Jenks, who had his light shotgun fastened across his shoulder by a strap arrangement, was holding up both hands, palm outward, as he walked. Ballyhoo knew that this was the recognized "peace sign" all over the wide world, and that in all probability there does not exist any tribe of human beings but who know its meaning. It was within the bounds of reason, therefore, that this Indian of the Orinoco should understand that Jenks meant him no harm.

Notwithstanding all this, he showed immediate

signs both of fear and rage. They saw him bound back, and Ballyhoo had a chilly sensation sweep over him as he began to believe the wild looking figure meant to insert another dart in his blow-gun, this time perhaps one of the poisoned variety, kept for human enemies.

Reasoning thus, Ballyhoo brought his rifle half-way up to his shoulder. The mere thought of shedding human blood was repulsive to the boy, though if forced to accept such a dreadful alternative he knew he must be brave, and ready to do his full duty.

How glad and relieved Ballyhoo felt when he saw that the native had suddenly changed his mind. His fears had evidently got the better of his temerity, for turning on his heel he fled like the wind. It was astonishing how cleverly he managed to pass in and out of great tangled masses of vegetation that would have blocked the passage of any white man.

They watched until he had quite vanished in the near distance. Then Jenks once more eagerly pushed ahead.

"I must get that bird, above all things," he told his companion. "It was the very species I started out hoping to run across; and to think how strangely it comes into my possession. Well, I have made a supper from a fish which fell beside me a full mile away from any water, and on looking up found that an eagle had chased an osprey fish-hawk and failed to clutch the descending prize in time. So a scientist bird specimen

hunter learns to accept all kinds of favors gratefully."

"I'd like to have that arrow for my share in the hunt," said Ballyhoo. "It'll be a good thing to recall the adventure in days to come. And, say, didn't he make a bull's-eye shot, though? Why, it would have taxed the carrying qualities of your little scatter-gun to bring down that same bird, but that dart went true to the mark."

They were compelled to hunt for a long pole before they could detach the dead bird from the top of the tall Spanish bayonet plant, Ballyhoo expressed his ardent admiration for the magnificent plumage of the prize.

"There are certainly some magnificent birds down here," he observed as he stroked the richly colored feathers, "if only it wasn't so terribly hot and sticky. Why, I'm in a bath half the time, what with the heat and atmosphere; and I have to keep vaselene in the barrel of my gun right along so as to prevent rust."

"Well, I'm satisfied now," remarked Philip Jenks; "that is, there's no need of our keeping up the hunt. Perhaps it would be just as well for us to strike back to the river, and reach camp."

The way in which he shot a suggestive look in the quarter whence the wild Indian had last been seen excited Ballyhoo's apprehension.

"Do you mean he's got companions over yonder that he might fetch back with him, and make us prisoners?" he exclaimed, frowning. "That'd be anything but pleasant and comfortable. For



all we know these fellows with the blow-guns may be regular cannibals. I don't know for certain whether they have such people down here in the Orinoco country, but we heard of them in Africa; yes, and I saw one man they said had disposed of lots of his enemies; for, you see, they believe that all the best qualities of their victims will pass on to them after the ceremony is carried through. But if you say hike, let's be starting, Philip."

"Wait a bit," the other went on to say, as though a bright idea had come to him. "I'd like to try and let that Indian know that while I've cribbed his bird, I don't mean to rob him outright."

"But however can you do that," asked Ballyhoo, wonderingly, "when the fellow has lit out from here?"

"There's a possible chance that he may come back again to search for our tracks and try to follow us," answered the naturalist. "I know a way to catch his eye if that should happen."

Ballyhoo, who was hardly to be reckoned an expert woodsman himself, watched the actions of his companion with more or less interest. And, indeed, young Jenks went about carrying out his little scheme with the confidence of one who knew what he was doing.

First he looked around, and seeing some reeds growing close by whipped out his hunting knife and secured one of these. This he shortened to about five feet, and at the smaller end he also slit it down for several inches.

After that he pressed the reed into the ground until it was firmly attached, and slanting at an angle of about thirty degrees. Then, taking out a large silver coin issued by the Venezuela Government, he inserted this in the slit.

"Well, now," remarked Ballyhoo, his curiosity satisfied, "I call that a lovely way of showing our copper-colored friend that we're no robbers. If he comes back here and sees that money he ought to call it square. It's as much as he ever would have gotten for the bird from one of those native piratical traders, I guess."

"Anyhow," laughed Philip, "my conscience is clear. I never meant to rob the poor fellow, and whether he gets this coin or not, I've done my duty. Now let's strike out on a bee-line for the camp."

Having had several never-to-be-forgotten experiences in getting lost in the forest, Ballyhoo had managed to keep a pretty accurate mental map of the surrounding country in his head. That is, he believed he knew which way the river lay, and once that was gained all that would be necessary in order to reach the camp would be to turn to the left, and press on.

It chanced that young Jenks was better posted even than that, for he did not waste any time in striking for the river first. His judgment regarding localities proved so good that inside of ten minutes after leaving the waving wand with the silver bait gripped in the crotch they heard voices, and then distinctly caught the smoke of the fire.

So in the end they walked into camp, with Jenks proudly holding up the beautiful specimen he had secured, showing by his looks that one of the ardent ambitions of his venture had been fulfilled.

## CHAPTER V

### WHEN THE JAGUAR LEAPED

"I CONGRATULATE you, Philip," called out Professor Yardley, as he advanced to take a look at the prize at close quarters, and almost immediately added in apparent astonishment: "but what's this I see sticking from the side of your bird. Since when have you taken to the blow-gun, my son?"

Of course at this both Oscar and Jack pressed up. They saw from the expression on Ballyhoo's face there was a story back of it. This was soon told, and when Jack learned how the others had actually crouched there watching the Indian with his native weapon bring down the gloriously plumaged bird from a high tree, he shook his head, and was heard to say:

"Hard luck! What wouldn't I have given to have been there," and of course they knew full well he meant with his camera, so as to secure a fine motion picture of the slaying of the feathered prize.

Professor Yardley looked a little grave.

"I hope it will blow over, and nothing evil come



of it," he went on to say; "but some of these Orinoco Indian tribes are savage and unreasonable people. They hate the whites like poison, and have little or nothing to do with them, selling what plumage they pick up to half-breed traders, and living as far away from the settlements on the Suata River as they can."

"It was unfortunate," admitted young Jenks, "but I did the best I could to prove that we wanted to deal honestly by him. If he does find that silver, he may understand."

"Well, there's no use crying over spilled milk," said the scientist, making the best of a bad bargain, as his class generally do. "We must exercise more care after this as we pass along the river; and when camping always keep a watch during the entire night."

Nothing more was said just then, but the three boys felt as though some sort of shadow hung over their heads. Ballyhoo thought it made things seem a bit more exciting, though neither of the others appeared to exactly like the idea. In Oscar's mind things were lively enough without their incurring the enmity of savage native tribes, who might resort to all sorts of desperate tactics in order to encompass their destruction.

Sure enough, the professor did lay out a programme of preparedness that night as they sat around and chatted. No fire was needed to keep them warm, and so the blaze was allowed to die down after it had afforded them due satisfaction along with the getting of supper.

Ballyhoo, always desirous of doing things, had commenced fishing as soon as he finished eating. One of the Indians, who could manage a few words of "pidgin English," was his mentor and guide, even showing him what bait to use, being grubs taken from an old stump of a monster forest tree that had been shattered by a bolt of lightning long years back.

Success followed his efforts, too, as the others knew from the oft repeated little ejaculations of delight they heard Ballyhoo give, as well as the "swish" of his heavy cane rod as he pulled his victims in; for Ballyhoo insisted on showing that he was a "pole" and not a mere hand-line fisherman.

He was very careful, however, not to make any slip, and tumble into the river. What he had seen of the alligators along the shore of the stream had made Ballyhoo lose any ambitious desire he may have entertained for taking a bath, either intentional or through accident.

Later on he came up to where the other four were sitting. The moon was not very large, but still afforded some light, so they could easily see the noble string of finny prizes that Ballyhoo dragged laboriously after him.

"Never saw such easy fishing in all my life," he told his chums, triumphantly. "All you have to do is to throw your baited hook in, and give a jerk, when you've got one on as sure as two and two make four. In fact, it's too much of a good thing. But then I had an attendant handy to bait the

hook, and take off the fish. Now we can have a great mess of the same for breakfast. I hope, sir, they're of an edible kind, and that all my hard work hasn't been wasted."

The professor thereupon told him he had partaken of that same species of fish many times in the past, and assured Ballyhoo they would be found equal to bass, with less bones in the bargain.

"Now sit down here, Ballyhoo," said Oscar, "and hear what we've been arranging. It's absolutely necessary that we keep watch and watch through the night, to guard against any of those natives slipping in on us. Each will have an hour and a half on duty, and arouse his successor, when he's done his bit, and can then sleep out the balance of the night."

"That's a good idea," commented Ballyhoo, always ready to shoulder his share of any burden, like a true chum. "Count me in the game with the rest. When do I come on deck, early or late?"

He was quickly given the programme as arranged. Indeed, his "spell" started in at the time they concluded to retire under their blankets. Although Ballyhoo may not have suspected it, this was done purposely. If there was any weak link in the chain it lay at his door, for he often grew careless; and as the night lengthened the danger was likely to increase in proportion. The Professor had told Jack and Oscar that these Indians, like nearly all primeval savages, were cunning enough to always wait when meaning to attack a sleeping enemy until the small hours of

the morning, for as a rule men are less vigilant at such times, and slumber weighs more heavily on their senses.

All of them felt considerably relieved when morning came and nothing out of the way had happened. During the earlier part of the following day they tried to keep well out in the river, so as to remain as distant from both shores as possible. Still, that hardly paid them, for the labor of rowing was much harder, and in consequence they covered less distance.

Besides, as the professor afterwards admitted, when condemning the policy, "this river is not so wide that one of those blow-guns couldn't get us from either side. We would have a better chance close under the shelving bank. But we must always be on our guard for other perils besides savages threaten at times."

Even as he spoke they heard a loud rumbling and splashing sound just a little way behind them, and of course turned their heads to look, not without considerable of a thrill.

"What d'ye think of that?" ejaculated Ballyhoo, immediately; "there goes a big tree falling over into the stream. The water must have undermined the bank, so in the end the roots couldn't hold up. Say, I'm glad for one we didn't happen to be close up to the bank when that occurred."

"That must be one of the perils you were speaking about, Professor?" ventured Oscar, at which the other nodded his head, and went on to say:

"I've had several narrow escapes myself from



falling trees, and once saw a boat-load of natives crushed under a mass of earth and timber. Since then I've always kept on the alert when passing along one of these rivers subject to overflows. An ounce of prevention is always better than a pound of cure is a good motto for all Orinoco explorers. Things happen very suddenly sometimes down here."

They had an instance of this very same thing before that day was done, and after it was over the three chums were ready to echo Professor Yardley's words.

Having come to the conclusion that they were no safer out there in the middle of the river than close in by the shore, the four boats started to follow the heavily wooded bank. The trees often overhung the water, and dense vegetation filled in the spaces between, so that it would have been next to impossible for any man to have advanced a rod without constant use of his keen-edged machete to slash a path through the matted mixture of plant life.

The leading boat contained the headman and the professor, as well as a number of native rowers. Close by came a second craft with Ballyhoo in it. Further back a third one held young Jenks, while in the rear Oscar and Jack occupied the last boat.

Jack had lagged behind for a purpose. He had his camera ready for business, and was only waiting for a certain light to come, when he meant to get some pictures of the expedition creeping along

under the wooded bank, which latter made with the river ahead a rare combination, according to the artistic judgment of the photographer.

In imagination Jack could almost hear the chorus of approval which was likely to invariably greet the coming of such a beautiful picture on the screen. So as he crouched there in the bow, having instructed his rowers how to cease all work, and sit absolutely still on his giving a certain signal, he only waited to catch the climax in the way of a view.

If the stage had been set purposely things could hardly have happened more opportunely. Jack himself often thought of this later on when he had a chance to review all that happened on the eventful trip.

Ballyhoo was idly lounging there in his boat, tired of sitting still, and hoping the professor would soon call a halt, so they could go ashore and stretch their cramped limbs. As usual, Ballyhoo kept his rifle within reach. He had admitted that it was his ambition to shoot one of those saurian monsters they frequently saw plunge into the river from a sloping log, or a high bank, whether they be of the alligator tribe or its first cousin, the true crocodile.

"Your series of pictures of this blooming region will never be complete," he had told Jack more than a few times, "until you've got some views of those scaly chaps. But they are so timid they drop overboard long before we get close enough up to make a good showing. So I'll have

to knock one over, and then we'll fix up a fake picture with him about to take the leg off one of our men here."

Suddenly the drowsy feeling that was stealing over Ballyhoo was dispelled with a shock. He heard a loud shriek, and, sitting up, looked hurriedly toward the other boat, only some thirty feet or so away.

What Ballyhoo saw just then was thrilling enough to satisfy any longing for excitement that may have been circulating through his system. It made him instantly reach out for his gun, that being the instinctive act of a born hunter.

Down from a leafy limb that was just above the boat a yellow object came flashing. Ballyhoo could see that it was a large animal of the cat tribe, and he did not need to be told that at last he was looking at a jaguar, the fiercest wild beast that roams the region of the Orinoco.

Just why the animal should thus venture to attack a boatload of human beings without any provocation whatever might never be fully known; but the chances were it had cubs near by, and the vigilant mother suspected that these men meant them harm.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CANNIBAL FISH

WHEN the jaguar made this sudden attack, of course the rowers forgot all about their oars, so that the boat lost headway immediately. One of the natives in his fright plunged headlong over the side, and came very near upsetting the boat in his haste to avoid those sharp claws and dangerous teeth.

There was something of a scramble as the beast started in to attack the three remaining Indians, desperately striking out at them, and parrying their flashing machete blades. Professor Yardley, sitting far in the stern at the time, was not in any peril for the moment. He had snatched up his gun, and seemed desirous to getting a chance for a shot; but the writhing bodies of his dark-skinned men were always in the way.

"Hold on, Professor!" Ballyhoo was calling, excitedly; "let me have a swing at him, please! I can get him a heap better than you."

"Go ahead, then!" sang out the scientist.

There was a sudden report that rang out above all the screaming and yelling and snarling. Ballyhoo had fired, taking a snap shot, because the



beast was so exceedingly active, jumping back and forth as though made of India rubber, that he could not find an opportunity to aim.

But at that short distance it would have been hard for any one accustomed to handling a gun to have utterly missed. So the boy's shot must have found its mark, for the mad jaguar was seen to make a tremendous effort to spring upwards again, with the evident intention of regaining a shelter amidst the dense foliage.

Whether it made a miscalculation and fell short, or was already weakened by the effect of the staggering wound it had received they could not tell; only it failed to reach the limb, and falling backward dropped struggling in the river.

Ballyhoo quickly got his gun in readiness for another shot. He had reason to believe that the cat was like a snake, "scotched, but not killed," and as it might try to climb into one of the boats, his business was to follow up his first effort with a more deadly shot.

The beast was swimming in circles, being sorely hurt. Even then its head had a sinister look, with those cruel white teeth showing between the parted lips, and its eyes glaring the hatred it felt toward those invaders of the solitudes.

So Ballyhoo coolly took a good aim this time, determined to close the drama for keeps. He had for some time been wishing such a chance to kill one of these terrible monsters would come along, though not dreaming his opportunity would arrive under such peculiar conditions.

When his gun spoke again it was all over. The jaguar gave a plunge, and then seemed to "close up shop," as Ballyhoo himself afterwards expressed it. With its death the exciting little river drama apparently came to a close. All that remained to be done was to secure the body before it sank; for of course the proud marksman meant to have that skin taken off at the first stop, and dried after the most approved fashion, so that he could always have something to remind him of his exploit.

But as it happened that was not the end. Hardly had the jaguar commenced to float away than once more loud outcries broke forth. Ballyhoo at first imagined a second cat might have come in sight, for they generally hunt in couples. He even allowed his eyes to rove up toward the matted canopy overhead, as though anticipating discovering another pair of yellow orbs glaring down at them.

Then, realizing his mistake, he turned his gaze toward the water again. For it turned out to be the native who had jumped overboard in the first place so as to avoid being clawed and bitten, who was giving vent to those wild cries.

He seemed to be fighting something, if his actions had a meaning. It could not be the jaguar that Ballyhoo had shot, for that animal was already drifting past nearly six feet distant, and was moreover inert, being entirely lifeless.

"Alligators!" Ballyhoo yelled, instinctively, though at the same time surprised because he saw

no sign of any protruding snout, nor was the water lashed into foam by the sweep of an angry tail.

"Electric eels!" snapped the professor, who apparently had a much better idea concerning the possible truth than any of the three boys could entertain, since he was acquainted through his work with all animated nature, as well as plant life.

The other boats were rapidly approaching by now, all of the occupants aroused by these alarming incidents following one another so closely that they seemed to be related in some way.

Ballyhoo sat there gun in hand, waiting. If his prediction turned out to be the true state of affairs, perhaps he might yet be given a chance to do some more fancy shooting. An alligator or a crocodile would be just as acceptable in his mind as a second tiger-cat.

Meanwhile the boat containing the scientist, urged on by the rowers, who had recovered the use of their muscles, and were making oars answer the purpose of paddles, was rapidly bearing down on the spot.

The man's actions grew more frantic than ever. He would kick and splash and try to fling himself around in the water, all the time aiming toward the shore, but making poor headway. It seemed to Oscar as though he were being held back by *something* that might be attached to his lower extremities. The boy was on his knees in the boat, craning his neck in the endeavor to see

just what was happening, for he felt mystified to explain why the Indian should act so strangely.

Once he believed he saw a passing gleam in the agitated water as though a stray sunbeam had glistened on the scaly side of a swiftly moving object, which fact only added to the mystery.

But now the boat was alongside, and the Indians commenced to beat the water with their oars. By this action they proved that the mystery was anything but such to them, and that they knew full well what was happening to their unfortunate comrade.

Reaching over, the professor caught hold of the man. The latter also made out to clutch the side of the big canoe, and between them all he was finally dragged in.

Ballyhoo gave a shout. "Did you see that?" he bellowed, in utter amazement. "Why, some of the bally cannibals kept hanging fast to his legs until they were dragged out of the water. Why, it's *fish* that tackled him, fish that eat flesh! Well, well, if that doesn't beat anything I ever heard of!"

Oscar understood it now. He remembered reading about those savage little monsters of the South American streams that will attack a man as quickly as a swarm of mosquitoes would, and tear him to pieces unless he could be quickly rescued, or drag himself out of their reach.

It was found that the wretched native had indeed been bitten in a score of places, nor were these mere little nips, but small pieces of flesh had



actually been torn from his limbs. He was bleeding at a great rate, and the professor saw that they would have to go into camp right away, so that the man's injuries could be properly attended to lest he become weakened through loss of blood, or septic poisoning set in, as is likely to be the case in hot moist climates.

Accordingly orders were given for making a stop at the first favorable chance. Meanwhile the scientist did what he could to stop the bleeding, and give the poor fellow some relief from the pain.

"This is a job for you, Oscar!" called out Ballyhoo. "What's the use of being the ward of a doctor if you don't get an opportunity now and then to show what you've seeped in through association."

Jack had already assured Professor Yardley that Oscar was a very clever hand at anything connected with surgery, and of course the other was only too glad to hand the case over into the young fellow's charge.

They soon afterwards went ashore, having luckily come upon a promising place for a camp. While some of the men busied themselves in making a fire and getting the tents pitched for the coming night, Oscar, assisted by Jack, and watched by the other three whites, proceeded to the business in hand.

Those wounds made by the terrible teeth of the fierce fish looked ugly enough. Oscar of course had never before treated a "fish-bite," and at another time Ballyhoo might have laughed such an

idea to scorn; but he now had the evidence before his eyes, and could not be skeptical longer.

One of the other men had several long scratches from the claws of the jaguar, and so Oscar proposed to treat all the lacerations in the same way, endeavoring to prevent any poisoning first of all by a thorough washing in tepid water, and then the application of a disinfectant, after which healing salve could be used to hasten the covering of the open wounds.

The headman also hovered close by and saw these things done with apparent interest, if his round eyes told anything. When finally all the injuries had been properly attended to, and neatly bound up, the patient, while unable to tell Oscar just how grateful he felt, at least had a way of his own for expressing his feelings. This was done by lifting the boy's hand, and kissing it several times. Afterwards Oscar could count on abject servility from that particular Indian, who would go through fire and water to serve him.

Professor Yardley smiled when Oscar remarked that he had seldom handled a more troublesome little job than attending to all those "punctures."

"You did it as well as any professional, son," he told the boy, "and I'm proud of you. Some day I'll find a chance to tell that guardian of yours what a credit to the profession you'll be making, since you hint that he's hoping you may later on in life conclude to become a medical man. And let me also tell you, Oscar, after this you're going

to be a bigger man than myself in the minds of these Indians. They already look on you as a white wizard, and you know what that means. Like our North American Indians, they reverence their 'medicine-man' down here, and he's usually the same sort of a big fraud, trying to frighten the evil spirit of sickness away by making all sorts of queer noises, and with incantations."

And sometimes after that, when Ballyhoo felt like being humorous, he would address Oscar as the "Big Medicine," the "Man who Talks with his Fingers, and drives the Bad Spirit away." But it turned out that the work was well done, for the fish-bitten man never suffered anything more than natural pain from his injuries.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE TROUBLES OF BALLYHOO

It turned out that they were now getting in what the scientists of the expedition declared was the "Promised Land" of enchantment, for both of them were beginning to find more and more specimens along the respective lines which they came after.

Already Professor Yardley had collected quite a bunch of what he called rare plants, though to the boys they appeared to be nothing remarkable, except that in some instances they certainly admired the rich, almost savage markings of the orchids which were found growing from crotches of trees, and making the air in the immediate vicinity almost sickening sweet with their strange exotic perfume.

Philip Jenks too was gathering some varieties of birds, the possession of which afforded him a vast amount of solid satisfaction. Here the boys were better able to understand and appreciate his feelings than in the case of the plant hunter; for some of these feathered creatures certainly



did present a bewildering appearance. They could imagine how splendid a showing they would eventually make when properly mounted, and with a background in perfect agreement with the country that claimed them for a habitat.

Ballyhoo, however, was far from enthusiastic. True, he had something to his credit and took exceeding great care of that jaguar pelt, which he kept stretched out on a home-made set of sticks, so it would keep its shape while drying; nor did he allow it to lie in the hot rays of the sun, since Professor Yardley had told him it must dry only exposed to the air, and not to let the last rays of the sun get on it.

The reason Ballyhoo felt uneasy was the fact that it kept him busy about half his time scratching. When a fellow itches all over from innumerable bites from those venomous ants to mosquitoes, and all sorts of other insects as well, he naturally becomes more or less nervous and ugly.

It was true Oscar had given him a soothing ointment with which he kept his whole person liberally annointed, until he declared he felt like an "Injun who was going on the warpath, and greased his hide so the enemy could not get a tight grip on him should they come to close quarters."

"I never in all my life saw so many varieties of blood-suckers as they have down here in this blasted country," he would often say, as he wriggled and squirmed and then dug at his calves furiously.

ously, against the protests of Oscar, who knew this only aggravated matters.

"Well, they were pretty bad out there in Africa!" ventured Jack, but Ballyhoo instantly turned on him to say vindictively:

"Not a circumstance to what we've run across here, I tell you, Jack. Why, just stop and think of all the blood-thirsty wretches there are, from those whopping big vampire bats, down the line through fish, flesh and fowl, to the ants that will eat you alive if you give 'em half a chance. I'm going to keep a record of all the dreadful things that creep, crawl and fly around a camp here, just waiting to devour any poor fellow that happens along."

Nevertheless, in spite of all his grumblings, which the others could pardon, for they knew Ballyhoo must suffer, he often threw this blanket aside, and was his old self, which meant the life of the party.

"I'd give a heap," he was heard to say one day as he looked longingly over the side of the boat at the water, "if I could only have a nice bath. But when I remember those cannibal fish, and hear a big 'gator splash nearby, or else think of what we've heard about those terrible electric eels that can give you an *awful* shock, why, I just make up my mind to forget all about being sanitary. No swim for me unless I find a nice little pond that hasn't got any leeches or other blood-suckers in it."

Jack was not sorry he had come, for he believed

he was gradually accumulating a select stock of motion pictures that would well repay him for all his labor. As for Oscar, he never announced whether he regretted the step or not; but the chances were he felt satisfied. Seeing so novel a country as the Orinoco region would be something worth boasting about in future days, when perhaps they had all fully grown, and were settled down to their more staid life work, whatever that might be.

And now it came to pass that Ballyhoo found himself in another difficulty; for it did seem that he could only keep out of trouble so long, and then had to tumble headlong into some sort of scrape that none of them had foreseen.

They were in camp at the time. A heavy wind had caused them to leave the river unusually early that day because of the difficulty in making headway, the rowers being very nearly exhausted by their efforts.

At one time the professor had thought they were about to have a heavy tropical storm come down upon them; and as they had passed through several experiences along these lines they made ample preparations to avoid being soaked through. It seemed, though, as if the wind had changed, for the clouds now looked much more broken.

Ballyhoo had accompanied young Jenks again. It gave him something to do so as to work off a part of that nervous tension; and, besides, he was

beginning to take more or less interest in the collection of those rare birds' skins, with all their gay plumage intact.

They had made a swing around, and picked up a couple of specimens that Philip seemed to prize considerably. Then, having discovered an odd-looking ivory-billed woodpecker up in the dead top of a tall tree not far away, the naturalist became enthusiastic, and filled with a desire to add to his bag, making a red letter day, indeed.

"Too bad," he told Ballyhoo just then, "that I've found I've been carrying something in my pocket the professor loaned me, and which I'm afraid he's needing badly right at this moment. And yet to give up the chance of getting that dandy bird just to go back to camp seems rough."

"Let me take it," suggested Ballyhoo, quickly, "for, truth to tell, I've had about enough tramping this hot afternoon. My itch bothers me a heap too, and I ought to get another dose of that grease treatment."

"That's kind of you, I must say," remarked young Jenks, "and I've a good mind to take you up on your offer. Here's the river close by, and all you'd have to do would be to follow the bank down till you came to the camp. In places I reckon you can even glimpse the boats drawn up on the little beach under the trees."

"Oh! no danger of *me* getting lost here," asserted Ballyhoo, belligerently. "I've had my lit-



tle lesson, all right, and never again for me. Gimme what you want me to hand over to the professor, and I'll be off."

Accordingly he presently turned his back on Philip, who was already starting to creep toward that high tree with the dead top, where the envied possessor of that big ivory bill kept up a rat-tat-too, as he knocked on wood to coax the hiding insects to peep out to see what was the matter.

When Ballyhoo thus started for camp he never dreamed that anything out of the ordinary would happen to him. He meant to keep an eye on the river, so that nothing could tempt him to wander away from its guiding care. If he came to a patch of vegetation that barred further progress, he had his sharp-edged machete along, with which to hew a path through the leafy barrier; though as a rule he preferred to go around, as it required less waste of energy, and this meant something on such a terrible hot day.

Once or twice the boy stopped to examine something that attracted his attention, for he had learned to keep his eyes about him at all times, and observe such objects as seemed out of the ordinary run.

As yet he had failed to hear the report of Philip's small-bore gun. Apparently, then, that elusive bird with the ivory bill must have flown to another tree, and tempted the ambitious young naturalist to chase after him.

"Well, now," Ballyhoo was saying to himself,

with something of a grin, "I hope he doesn't go and get mixed in his bearings, and turn up lost. From all I've heard it wouldn't be the nicest thing going to get wandering around in this awful wilderness. I reckon it'd even be worse than staying all night in a tree, with a pair of ferocious lions keeping guard below." \*

Once he saw a peculiar track in the earth that interested him, as it was entirely strange to him.

"Now I wouldn't be surprised at all if that was made by a tapir," Ballyhoo told himself. "I'll remember what it looks like so I can describe it to the professor. He'll be apt to know just what sort of a track one of those big hogs would make. And right here looks like a good place for snakes, so I'll watch out."

Scrutinizing every hanging vine before trusting himself too near, he slowly kept on his way along. Once or twice he had little shocks when he fancied he could see some suggestive squirming motion to one of those thick lianas; but a second and more comprehensive examination always relieved his mind.

He may have gone something like a quarter of the way to the camp from the spot where he parted company with Jenks, when again Ballyhoo stopped short.

"Now, what under the sun was that queer

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"The Motion Picture Comrades through African Jungles."

noise?" he muttered, glancing hastily around him. "I declare it sounded just like our old cat's little blind kittens crying for dinner. And there it starts up again. I guess it must come from that bunch of brush ahead yonder, and I've got a good notion to take a look in."

Had Ballyhoo been really wise, he would have immediately made a detour, and avoided that same bunch of brush as though it concealed a leper; but after all he was only an impulsive, and often thoughtless boy, acting upon the first inspiration that surged into his mind.

At least he advanced slowly and cautiously, holding his gun in readiness for instant work should anything warrant it. The queer cries continued to well up, and further increased Ballyhoo's curiosity.

"Must be kits, for a fact," he said, "and mebbe belonging to one of those big tiger-cats in the bargain."

The thought sobered him, and he stood still for a minute, because there flashed into his mind a vivid picture of that jaguar he had seen drop into the boat, and madly attack the five occupants as though numbers never counted.

"Shucks! who's afraid?" he presently told himself, as he took a firmer grip on his rifle. "No harm just to take a peep at the little runts. I never saw baby tigers outside of a show, and I'd like to say I did. So here goes for a look, anyway!"

With that resolve the boy again started slowly

forward. Louder and more insistent did those baby wailings arise, and Ballyhoo felt more disposed than ever to see what a jaguar's cubs looked like.



## CHAPTER VIII

### TAKING BIG CHANCES

“WELL, I’ll be jiggered if that doesn’t look cute, now. Two of ’em, for a fact, and just like our kittens at home, only clumsier!”

Ballyhoo was saying this as he thrust his head through some bushes and looked down on a couple of objects that were sprawling there on what seemed to be a litter of dry leaves and rubbish. He made sure first of all to glance closely around, so as to be certain that the mother cat was not in sight.

The cubs were very young; in fact, they did not seem to have their eyes fully open to the daylight. Ballyhoo was very fond of all animals, and particularly those that dwelt in the open. He could not resist the great temptation to say he had stroked the back of a jaguar cub, right there in its lair.

“Whoo! quit your spitting and snarling!” he muttered as his hand came in contact with the sleek back of the larger cub. “Did you ever see anything to match that, I want to know. Why, the little chap never saw a human being in his life,

and doesn't know only by instinct that there are enemies in this old world, yet just see him strike up at me with his funny little paw, would you, while he snarks and spits just like our Puss does when a strange dog comes in the yard."

He persisted in patting the whelp of the jaguar. There was a sort of dreadful fascination about it to Ballyhoo, although another boy might not have considered such an entertainment worth the risk.

But Ballyhoo had seemingly forgotten all about the ferocity of the jaguar they had met on the river. True, he did keep a wary eye about him, and held his gun in one hand, ready for business; but all the same he did not hasten away from so dangerous a spot, as a really wise boy would have done.

Then a terrible temptation smote him. Ballyhoo never could fully and satisfactorily explain how he came to yield to it. He often declared he felt like a fool every time he remembered it, and wanted some one to kick him.

But the tempter put it into his head to want to fetch one of those same cubs to the camp with him, just to show it to the other fellows. They could then take it outside to the bush and leave it there, for its parent would of course easily find it again through that wonderful instinct of scent possessed by all wild animals.

He shot another look around him. The coast seemed absolutely clear, and there was not a sign of any danger.

Ballyhoo was one of those fellows who nearly always act on impulse, rather than obeying the cold dictates of reason. Allowing that thought to have dominion over him, he hurriedly snatched up one of the cubs, the larger at that, and tucked it under his arm.

The savage little atom struck wildly at him, and snarled something dreadful. Ballyhoo was half tempted to drop it. He began to wonder whether the mother could be approaching the spot, and so hear the cries of her offspring, calculated to tell her some enemy must be afoot.

But Ballyhoo was also very stubborn. He hated to give up anything on which he had set his heart. So, turning, he backed out of the covert.

Once in the open, he started on a quick walk. As he went he kept turning his head this way and that, searching the bushes and tangled growth around him with his eager gaze. The fear in his heart was only kept down by pride; he told himself that he would feel silly if he dropped the cub now, after making this start, and planning to show it to Jack and Oscar.

So he kept on his way. The camp was not so distant but that he might expect to reach it before a great while. And that mother jaguar might be far away, waiting in a crotch of a favorite tree to pounce on some animal below that would make a dinner for herself before she went back to feed her whelps.

Several times he stopped to listen, thinking he had heard some sound nearby that to his heated

imagination took on all the alarming symbols of an avenging cry. Each time he sniffed, and even clung the more tightly to the squirming little body he had tucked under his left arm.

"Stop your whimpering and complaining, can't you?" he told his prisoner. "Nobody means to hurt you, silly little fool that you are. But then I suppose that's only the wild animal instinct. Even a baby jaguar smells an enemy in a human being. Gee! I'm beginning to sweat like a work horse. I wonder is the camp much further now?"

Then he perked up his ears again; for the third time he believed he had surely caught some suggestive sound that resembled the cry of a cat looking for its lost kitten.

"By ginger! I believe the old girl is after me!" Ballyhoo told himself, with just the faintest tremor in his voice, while his fingers tightened about his gun.

He glanced back of him, but quickly found that he had need of all his eyesight in another quarter, for he at once tripped, and came near sprawling flat.

Nevertheless it might be noticed that he had now started into as much of a run as the tangled growth by which he was confronted allowed. Strange to say, he still clung to the cub, such was his persistent nature. As his progress increased, and the sounds of pursuit became clearer, Ballyhoo would possibly change his mind about carrying the baby jaguar all the way to camp.

"But, then," he reasoned, in his set way, "if



things really get desperate, course I c'n drop the plagued thing. When the mother cat comes on it she'll be satisfied, and not chase any further after me. She'd better not, that's all, if she knows what's good for her. I'd hate to kill the mother, and leave the cubs to starve to death, but then they're only jaguars at the best, and killers of other animals."

Ballyhoo could salve his elastic conscience in this fashion, but at the same time he soon began to wonder whether it was really wise for him to keep carrying that wretched little beast any further. It was struggling harder than ever now, as though it seemed to catch and recognize the cries of its parent not far distant.

Some other animal sprang up ahead and rushed away. The sound of its passage gave Ballyhoo a sudden sensation, as if a bucket of ice-cold water had been poured down his back. His breath too was beginning to come in pants, owing to the energy he had to put forth in order to make forward progress.

"Guess the game is up," he muttered, angrily, for he did hate to give over any project, however simple, on which he had set his heart. "I've either got to get rid of this cub or else kill its mammy. Well, all right, if you object to being made a show of I'll have to say good-bye. But, anyway, I've had one in my hands, which is something."

He had not stopped while saying this. Minutes, even seconds, were too precious to admit of

any such prodigal waste of time. Those strange cries were certainly getting close by now, and he might expect to see the enraged mother come leaping out of the bushes without much further delay.

So Ballyhoo dropped the cub. He did not throw it angrily down, but actually stopped to place it gently on the ground, which was after all a very strange thing for a boy to do under the circumstances.

After that he gave a hurried look around, and then started off again. In fact, all this while in his haste the boy had taken very little heed as to which way he was going; to the right or left he had ducked, attracted more by some promising opening in the thick growth than any choice of direction.

He had hardly managed to press on a score of paces when he heard a sound back of him that thrilled him to the core. It was the cry a cat might be expected to give utterance to on discovering a lost kitten.

Ballyhoo could not resist the temptation to look over his shoulder. He saw a flash of dun-colored sides, and then there was an enormous jaguar standing over the spot where he had left the cub. So far as the boy could tell, the mother was licking the sleek coat of the baby. Of course her wonderful scent would immediately tell her that a profane hand had lately held her offspring. Ballyhoo wondered if the insult would stir her blood to the fighting pitch, or whether, satisfied

now that she had recovered her own, the animal would go back to her lair.

Then to his alarm he saw her raise that head with the short ears and the glaring eyes. She was looking straight at him, it seemed. The boy's blood ran cold. He jumped to the conclusion that the beast meant to spring after him, bent on avenging her wrongs.

Ballyhoo was so impressed with this thought that he even started to run, as it happened there appeared a little opening before him. Perhaps when the jaguar saw that he was departing she would hesitate to leave her cub unprotected again.

All might have gone well but for an unexpected accident. In plunging forward so hurriedly Ballyhoo managed to rush straight into a series of hanging vines, and, as luck would have it, he caught his leg in a crotch, so that he was thrown heavily to the ground.

The first thing that came into his mind was the terrible thought connected with one of those monstrous anacondas the professor had been telling them about. Ballyhoo had once seen a black caught in the tightening folds of a boa constrictor, and could realize the horror that must come over any one thus trapped.

He had struck rather heavily, and was a little dazed, but the first thing he did was to throw up his hand and feel to see if his worst fears would be realized. When he made the discovery that it was after all only a nest of tenacious lianas, hang-

ing from the limb of a tree, into which he had rushed, at least his mind was relieved to a certain extent.

Then another fact confronted him. It brought troubles of its own to cause the boy a renewal of his fears. Try as he would, he did not seem able to break away from the tenacious grip of those vines. In some strange fashion they had wound themselves about his leg, or rather his foot; and although he tugged desperately until there was danger of dislocating his ankle, it was without any appreciable result.

He was surely trapped, and with that savage jaguar only forty feet or so away, ready to spring and tear him to pieces. Ballyhoo then remembered about his rifle. It had been in his hand at the time he took that nasty header, but he certainly did not have it now. The shock of his fall must have torn it from his grasp. He looked frantically about, hoping to see the faithful gun on which his very life might depend lying within easy reach. Then he could snatch it up, squirm around so as to face the enemy, and prepare to fight to the last.

There was a grievous disappointment in store for Ballyhoo. True enough, his rifle was there in plain sight, but it had been hurled far enough away so that no matter how he strained his body he could not come within twenty inches of the end of the stock!

Never in all his life had Ballyhoo Jones found himself in such a dreadful predicament as just



then; and if he could have been given an opportunity to figure out what his feelings were, doubtless he would have bitterly repented of his rash act in meddling with that jaguar mother's cubs.

## CHAPTER IX

### LOSING HIS BEARINGS

**LIKE** a flash of light the boy had an inspiration. He had been tugging with might and main to get his foot free from that clinging vine, but always in the one direction. The simplest way to break away would be to push his foot out in the same fashion that it had gone in!

It took considerable nerve to "back water" when he knew that beast was crouching there so near at hand; for in doing so he was actually decreasing the distance between them; but with clenched teeth, and perhaps white cheeks in the bargain, Ballyhoo persisted.

He held his breath while he worked, and oh! how eagerly did he strain his hearing so as to continually catch that soft purring sound made by the jaguar. By this he understood she was still licking the cub, as though contented to have it once more in her possession, even though the two-legged robber did lie groveling there on the ground.

Then the boy felt his foot come free. **He never**

experienced a sensation equal to the spasm of relief that swept over him from head to toe on finding that he could once more control his movements. The first thing he did was to crawl forward with outstretched hands toward the spot where his gun lay.

How good it felt to get hold of the weapon again. It only showed what confidence one may put in such a means for defending life against savage attack. Ballyhoo no sooner had it in his possession than he turned, and still squatting there on his knees covered the jaguar.

But his finger did not press the trigger. He was trembling all over; the light was none too good in the spot where the beast could be seen; and, worst of all, he had some reason to suspect from certain sounds that reached his ear there might be another creature of the same species, possibly her mate, hovering near.

Accordingly the boy held his hand, and did not allow the temptation to fire have dominion over him. For once he showed that he could be discreet, and perhaps it was just as well.

He saw that she still bent over the whelp and licked it soothingly, doubtless also in her brute fashion telling her offspring that the danger was over, and everything all right.

"Oh! I certainly do hope she is satisfied with the fright she gave me," Ballyhoo muttered, as he continued to keep watch, with his rifle ready for instant use, "and clears out with her ugly little bunch of spitting, snarling cat-meat. She

ought to understand that I'm out of the running, and don't mean her any harm."

A brief time passed, but the minutes seemed like hours to the anxious boy. Then, greatly to his relief, he discovered that the mother jaguar had caught hold of the cub by the loose skin about its neck, just as many a time he had seen the pet cat at home carry her kittens back after they had been dispossessed from a closet in the kitchen.

"Bully for you, old lady!" whispered Ballyhoo, not wishing to speak out louder lest he annoy the beast, and cause her to change her mind. "I hope you go about your own business, and leave me alone. I've had all the fun with a jaguar cub I'm hankering after today, thank you."

To Ballyhoo's surprise, after leaving the spot, the animal seemed to circle partly around him. He was puzzled to account for this fact, and it annoyed him too.

"Now I wonder why she does that?" Ballyhoo asked himself. "Surely she knows the way back to where that other cub was left when she took after me, so she couldn't be lost in her bearings. I guess she must know of another and better den than the one I ran on, and is making for that. But, hang the luck, she's right in my path when I start again for camp!"

There was nothing apparently for him to do but make a detour. Ballyhoo accordingly bore off to one side, and cautiously advanced. His one thought just then was to give a wide berth to that



section where he believed he was apt to again run across the jaguars.

It was not long when he discovered that he was passing through country where it was even more difficult to navigate than any ground he had thus far encountered. A number of times, in order to make any advance at all, he had to use his machete in order to slash a gash through the matted growth by which he was confronted. Then on other occasions Ballyhoo, thinking discretion the better part of labor, chose to veer aside and go completed around the obstacle that was in his way.

It was not so very surprising that under such conditions the boy became what he frankly called "rattled," in so far as a definite knowledge concerning the position of the camp was concerned.

"Huh! seems a bit like the same old story," he said at one time, when stopping to wipe his wet face with his big bandana handkerchief. "In fact, I'm feeling some of the well remembered sensations of being adrift without a compass. Let's see, over there the sun is certainly getting low down, and that must be West. Then North is over on my right, and East still further along. I'm dead sure of the cardinal points of the compass, if that was all I had to worry me; but where in the wide world does that camp lie, East, North or West of here?"

As usually happens, the more Ballyhoo tried to remember the greater became his confusion of

ideas. He went over the details as many as half a dozen times before he could seem to grip anything like the facts. And at that there was but cold comfort in figuring it out.

He made another start, and kept at it bravely for some time, but, as before, found himself confronted by many impassable thickets and overgrown masses of vegetation that looked so much like harboring places for snakes that Ballyhoo did not have the nerve to cut his way through, and so he resumed his former policy of taking the easiest and safest route, which meant going around.

This kept puzzling him as to where he was heading, and he had to stop again so as to get his bearings in hand. It would have been easy to tell where the West lay, if only his view happened to be less obstructed, for there must have been a great glow in the sky, with the sun setting. But so dense was the foliage overhead, and such the rank growth all about him, that he could rarely catch a glimpse of the heavens above, and had to make a sort of guess.

Ballyhoo now began to get alarmed. He knew night was not far distant, and yet he failed to have the slightest idea where the camp lay, or how far away. He tried shouting, but received no answer to his salutes. He would have fired his gun a number of times, but prudence urged him to save all his shots, for there was no telling how badly he would need them before this adventure came to an end.

"Well!" he exclaimed, with a half laugh, when he had shouted and whistled and done all that lay in his power to attract attention without result, "this is a nice kettle of fish, I must say. You've gone and done it again, Ballyhoo Jones, seems like. I believe you could get lost in a wood-lot up home and then not half try. They'll have to put a bell on you like we do with our old cow, so we can find her if she strays away. And how d'ye suppose it's going to feel going hungry tonight, eh?"

Now that it was too late to remedy matters he was becoming more and more disgusted with his action in bothering about those silly little spitting cubs. If only he had left them alone, instead of bothering to carry one off, all this trouble might have been avoided.

"Another time see to it you mind your own business, and don't stick your nose where it isn't wanted, Ballyhoo Jones," he continued, after he had tripped and come near measuring his full length on the ground, for it was not so easy to detect those miserable vines now that grew so close to the earth, and served as traps for unwary feet.

He began to realize that he could not keep this up much longer. Apparently, then, he was doomed to spend a night all alone in the Orinoco wilderness, with its myriad of strange creature inhabitants, from monkeys to tiger-cats and such.

All at once Ballyhoo stopped, and half threw

his gun up to his shoulder. There came a crashing in the undergrowth as though some large or bulky animal might be dashing toward him.

Following the sounds, he was just able to make out some clumsy-looking animal that seemed to be a cross between a domestic hog and a rhinoceros, such as he had seen in African wilds. It was fortunately running past, and evinced no intention of attacking him, a fact Ballyhoo discovered with no small degree of satisfaction.

"Guess now that must have been one of those tapirs the professor has been telling us about," he went on to say; for, like most persons who are lost, Ballyhoo liked to hear the sound of his own voice, for it helped to give him a fictitious confidence. "But then they're not so *very* dangerous, I understand. Wonder now if I ought to have tried to knock him over. If his flesh would taste as much like hog as his looks say, I might not have had to go supperless tonight. But shucks! my hindsight is always a heap better than my foresight; and I reckon I'll have an empty stomach till morning comes, when I can shoot some game, and have a feast."

Another time it must have been some bird that scurried out of the lower branches of a tree, though the sudden sound again caused Ballyhoo's heart to jump wildly. He was in a nervous condition after that shock when his foot caught in those vines.

It was now rapidly growing dark, a fact the



boy noted with increasing uneasiness. He could people the gloom that was gathering around him with all manner of savage monsters ready to pounce down upon him.

"Wow! what's that up yonder?" he exclaimed, as he caught sight of two luminous spots that must have been the eyes of some living thing; at first Ballyhoo believed he was up against another jaguar, but just then a "whoo-oo-oo" in the near distance explained that this must be the mate to the owl he was hearing off yonder.

Nevertheless he made a little detour, not fancying passing directly under the tree where he had seen those weird phosphorescent spots. When he ran into a large hanging vine Ballyhoo decided it was time to halt.

"Why, that might just as well have been a whopper of a snake," he told himself, after coming to this conclusion. "It isn't safe tramping around in these woods after nightfall. So I'd better call a halt now as later, after the mischief is done."

Thus reasoning, he set about finding a place where he might build a fire, for he was determined not to think of passing the night there without something of this sort to protect him against all prowling wild beasts.

"One thing I'm glad to say," he announced, proudly, "which is that on this occasion I'm all fixed with plenty of matches. That other time, when I got mixed in my bearings away over in Africa, I had the misfortune to forget such im-

portant things; which forced me to shin up a tree, and stay there all night, with a whole army of lions walking around beneath, waiting for me to drop down like a ripe plum. But this seems about as good a place as I can find, so here goes for a blaze!"

## CHAPTER X

### THE LONE CAMP-FIRE

It certainly did improve things considerably after he had a little blaze started. Ballyhoo hastened to add to it by throwing on some larger wood. As the night was anything but cool thus far, he understood that he would probably be par-boiled or roasted if he carried his plans out; but even that was preferable to being devoured by wild beasts.

"I used to write in school that 'those who live by the sword will perish by the sword,' " Ballyhoo reminded himself, feelingly; "and mebbe now because I've always been so fond of imitating all sorts of wild animals I'm doomed to make a meal for one of the four-legged creatures. Well, here goes for a second fire. If only I thought I could get enough stuff together I'd make even a third one, so I could squat down in the triangle between them all, and be protected on every hand."

When he had both fires going the gloom seemed less terrible. In fact, Ballyhoo almost began to feel cheerful, and told himself that if only he had some meat to toast on the end of sticks, with per-

haps a pot of coffee to wash it down, he wouldn't mind sticking it out all night there, backed up as he was with his faithful repeating rifle.

But as he did not possess a scrap of food, this prospect was only in the nature of a dream. He hastened to put it out of his mind. There was little else to do save gather wood for his fires, and presently Ballyhoo devoted himself to that labor with increased energy. The thought had come to him, what if beasts prowled around just outside the circle of light his fires made, how could he then expect to keep up his wood-gathering, when it might be unsafe for him to wander ten feet away from his base?

The forest was no longer silent as when sunset saw him trudging through its dim aisles. All sorts of noises reigned, from the hum of insects to the calls of unknown animals searching for their prey.

Ballyhoo had reason to believe that somewhere close at hand there must be a sort of slough, or small pond in the heart of a swampy stretch. The sounds that proceeded from this section exceeded all others in volume; some of them were of a mysterious nature, too, sending a shiver over the boy, though he always laughed at himself for allowing this.

He never went out after wood but what he clung to his gun, for he realized what a dreadful thing it would be if some animal sprang toward him while he was unarmed. Consequently, being thus hampered, he could only fetch a small quantity



in at a time, which forced him to make numerous forays.

Between times, after he had piled up quite a nice lot of fuel, he sat there in between his two fires, with his hands clasped about his knees, and his gun close beside him, reflecting.

His thoughts turned back to his two chums, and then went much further afield: again Ballyhoo was in the home town, perhaps under his own roof enjoying a "dandy spread" at Thanksgiving time, with turkey, cranberry sauce, turnips, potatoes, mince and pumpkin pie, and perhaps to wind up with ice cream. His mouth fairly watered at the thought, and he had to shut his teeth tightly together to repress a groan as he compared his hungry condition with that roseate state.

"Here, just quit bothering with thinking about the impossible," he told himself, while with one hand he rubbed his empty stomach. "Serves you right, after playing the fool. Hope you get the lesson pounded well into your head, and let well enough alone after this. When you see a pretty little cub belonging to a wild animal just look the other way, and go on about your own business. Oh! what's that, I wonder?"

Something was certainly moving close to the ground. He craned his neck the better to look at it. Yes, and he remembered that he had just recently come from that identical spot, so he knew there had not a short time before been anything alive there. But undoubtedly something was moving, yes, and coming in a direct line for him!

"Gee whiz! I wonder could it be a jaguar, now, or one of those smaller cats they call ocelots?" Ballyhoo asked himself. "It looks pretty low down for that, but haven't I seen how a cat can flatten itself when it wants to sneak on to the sparrow it's marked for dinner? Well, I'll watch and see. At the worst, I can give the creature something to startle him."

So he knelt there and kept busy watching. Closer still the queer object drew. The boy's bewilderment increased, for by now he had fully decided that it could not be any jaguar. Then in advancing it must have come to some obstacle that forced a little change in its course. At that moment, too, the nearer fire chose to send up a new burst of flame, and Ballyhoo gave a startled grunt.

"Well, I declare if it isn't a great big alligator!" he exclaimed, after making a discovery. "Where in the wide world could he have sprung from? Oh! I forgot I'd settled it; there must be a lagoon of some sort over that way. Yes, and it's full of great big crawlers in the bargain, I bet you. This one must have grown curious about all this fire business, and come up to see what it meant."

The fact that he was in danger of being inundated with a flood of savage and hungry saurians at any time during that long night did not serve to make Ballyhoo feel any happier. He knew that they liked human flesh, and remembered reading **how in India** in olden times mothers used to throw

the babies they didn't want to the crocodiles of the sacred Ganges.

"Hey! better turn tail, and go back to where you came from, old chap," he sang out, hardly caring to waste one of his precious shots in trying to dispose of such a useless reptile.

Taking up a clump of wood, he hurled it with such splendid aim that it crashed against the head of the crawling alligator, and caused the creature to immediately scurry back the same way it had come. Ballyhoo felt as though he had achieved a great triumph with that lucky shot.

"That comes from being a baseball pitcher," he plumed himself by saying. "Only practice would allow a fellow to hit the alligator's bull's-eye like that. Didn't I once get four prizes at the fair by plunking the nigger's head with a baseball? But, say, I hope I won't have to use up much of my fuel that way. They might play the game of drawing my fire till my ammunition got low, and then rush the camp."

As time passed on he found, somewhat to his satisfaction, that no other alligators followed after that leader. Possibly he scattered a warning abroad that it was dangerous to creep up too near that dazzling light, for it was no sun, after all. But from time to time Ballyhoo heard a loud bellow from some old bull that reminded him of the stock farms at home.

He yawned, and stretched himself time and again. It promised to be the longest night in his whole experience, not excepting the one that al-

ways came just before Christmas, and the day before school would let out for the summer vacation.

He wished those monkeys would quit chattering there among the trees, scolding their babies, and perhaps holding a council to consider the next day's campaign in search of fresh nut trees.

Then Ballyhoo had another bad shock. This time he felt sure he could not be mistaken, and that the object dangling there from the limb of a tree that stood at least fifteen feet from the ground swung to and fro with a rhythmic stroke that meant it was a living thing, and not a mere thick vine.

Yes, it was a snake, Ballyhoo was positive of that! He had run across about every other sort of thing that lived in the Orinoco forest but an anaconda, and now he believed he was staring straight at one.

Perhaps some of that fierce chattering on the part of the monkey tribe had been caused by the presence of this same serpent in the vicinity, for the professor had told them how monkeys are deemed a choice bite by anacondas. The fire may have attracted the reptile, which made Ballyhoo wish he could do without a blaze, though of the two evils he felt he would rather face what he had to with light to see, rather than grope around in the gloom, and know enemies were nearby, but hidden from his view.

No danger of his losing his senses in slumber, now that he knew such a terrible foe menaced him. He got up on one knee, and arranged him-



self so that he might steady one elbow in case he wished to take accurate aim.

Would the giant serpent finally grow weary of dangling there, and waving its big head back and forth? In such a case it was just as apt to drop to the ground and come gliding toward him. Were snakes in dread of fire, just as all wild animals seemed to be? For the life of him, Ballyhoo could not remember, if he had ever known. Suppose, then, he did snatch up a blazing brand and hurl it with the same great luck that had attended his effort with that root; was this action likely to be taken as a polite invitation to decamp on the part of the great anaconda, or would it fly into a rage and come gliding straight at him?

Several times Ballyhoo let his cheek rest against the stock of his gun. He was constantly covering that slowly moving head.

"I bet you I could hit it as easy as anything, just when it gets to the end of the swing," he told himself. "Ought I to make the try or not? Seems like I have to choose between six of one and half a dozen of the other. And if the old thing starts over this way I never can count on hitting it while in motion."

This decided him in the end. He was making a deliberate choice, and believed that in settling on firing he was really taking the better chance. Accordingly he now prepared to shoot, not without considerable uneasiness, it must be confessed; for he dreaded the result of his daring in case he failed to dispatch the monster snake.

"I've just *got* to do it, you see," he assured himself, "so stop your shivering, Ballyhoo Jones, and show what you're made of. Guess you've shot a heap of other things just as ferocious as any old anaconda can ever be. And you've got to hit that big head plum center, mind you. Then if he does come this way throw yourself flat on the ground, and p'r'aps he can't get his folds around you so easy. They don't bite, only squeeze. Now steady, boy, steady it is!"

He believed his chance had come. With the trained eye of one who had shot swiftly-flying ducks on the wing, Ballyhoo pressed the trigger of his rifle just as the swinging head reached the end of its pitch to the right. There would be just a half second's hold there, he knew from his experience in breaking clay targets, and hitting swinging ones, before it started back again, and that is always the best time to do execution.

The gun sounded sharp and clear. Ballyhoo instantly commenced working the mechanism so as to have another cartridge in the firing chamber should the first have failed in its mission, which he certainly hoped might not prove to be the case.

## CHAPTER XI

### SHOOTING AN ANACONDA

“Got him, that’s what I did!” burst from the boy’s lips, as glancing up after quickly placing his gun in condition for further use he saw a writhing mass of coils threshing about on the ground with terrific force.

Ballyhoo stared aghast at the thrilling spectacle of that monster serpent displaying such frightful energy in its convulsions. He knew his bullet must have smashed the reptile’s head, and that what he now witnessed were the dying throes of his scaly enemy.

Now the snapping folds had wrapped around a tree, and the boy could easily imagine how his own poor ribs must have given way under such a tremendous pressure as the anaconda displayed. He felt greatly pleased to know that it was an inanimate object which was being treated to such an exhibition of furious force.

Ballyhoo was a little skeptical with regard to the ability of the serpent to do him any harm. He felt like stepping closer, and using another

bullet in order to finish the reptile. However, after a while it became apparent that the exhaustion of the anaconda was becoming more positive.

"I guess he can't bother me any more," the boy told himself, with a sigh of relief. "Right now I can see that the big chap is getting weaker and weaker. But how about his mate, for I reckon they travel in pairs, like the jaguars do. Mighty little sleep for me tonight, that's sure, what with alligators, and snakes, and creeping cats. Ugh! it isn't much fun to find yourself alone in these Orinoco forests, with all these creepy things around, and that's a fact."

How the minutes did drag. Ballyhoo suffered all the tortures any one could who was half dead for sleep, and yet dared not let his eyes close for even the shortest space of time. When he felt the desire to doze overcoming him he would summon his energies to the fore, and jumping up commence to throw more wood on one or the other of the two fires.

Really it kept him busy attending to these guardians of his comfort and safety, for they devoured the fuel wonderfully fast.

He watched the stars as well as he could see them, what with the thick canopy of leaves overhead, and in this way knew how the night was passing. Sometimes in his eagerness to discover the first peep of dawn Ballyhoo almost believed some modern Joshua must have commanded the planets to halt in their mad flight, for it seemed



as though they never would near the western horizon.

He was pretty well fagged out when finally he did discover that the first gleam of daylight was coming in the eastern heavens. How slowly it progressed, only his impatient spirit could attest; but in the end he began to be able to see objects around him again, which fact made him very happy.

"Whee! I'll never, never forget that awful night, if I live to the age of Methuselah," was what Ballyhoo told himself, as he stood up to stretch and yawn for the twentieth time.

He looked with a shudder toward the spot where the great anaconda had last been seen. Then he rubbed his eyes, for those huge folds were no longer wrapped around the tree. But immediately afterwards he saw the snake extended upon the ground, where it had fallen in a last vain effort to crawl away; and there it was, stretched out at full length.

Just then Ballyhoo became conscious of the fact that the monkeys were unusually vociferous. He could only see them passing from tree to tree, clinging to the branches, and chattering at a lively rate continually.

"Wonder what's up," the boy was saying, for when alone in the wilds it is some comfort to hold a conversation with one's self; "the Johnnies act as if they meant to hold a caucus, because they're all converging toward a common centre. Must be a special court they're expecting to convene, to

try a criminal offender, because Professor Yardley says they act a heap like human beings."

He watched the assembling groups, and even mimiced some of their cries, for this was just in Ballyhoo's line, it must be remembered.

"Mebbe they're just curious about *me*," he now remarked. "Never saw a two-legged creature with a white skin before, and they want to find out what the latest style in fashionably cut clothes is like."

He was chuckling over this humorous suggestion when all at once an idea broke in upon his mind. He noticed that some of the old monkeys seemed to be staring down in a solemn way, and trying to draw the attention of the younger fry to something of deep interest.

"Why, sure, it's the old anaconda they're gaping at," Ballyhoo admitted. "They sense that the big snake is a dead one, and that it's safe now to show him to the kids and baby monks. See how that old patriarch with the gray beard chatters and scolds, will you? I bet you he's preaching a regular sermon right now, if only a fellow could understand monkey talk. Gee! the trees are full of the swinging critters. I wager there's as many as fifty, if there's one, and all just taking it out in looking. Not one dares drop down and step up to touch the dead enemy. Even as it is they fear that he may be playing 'possum, just to coax them within reach."

Ballyhoo began to realize that he was fearfully hungry. It seemed to him, once he allowed this

fact to take possession of his mind, as though he were on the border of actual starvation. A boy with a healthy appetite, accustomed to devouring three square meals each and every day, when two of these were missed usually as a "gone" feeling that makes him imagine his end must be near at hand.

"I wonder just how long I *could* stand this?" he asked himself, in a mournful tone, and with a sad shake of his head. "Why, my stomach nearly rubs against my backbone right now, I'm so empty. Course I can hunt for some sort of game, after I get started, and with plenty of matches I could make a fire to cook it. Oh! what's to hinder me from knocking over one of those young monks, and cooking some meat? I remember the professor telling us how he was saved from starving once by a meal of monkey flesh."

The idea fascinated him so much that he started looking around so as to pick out his victim. There would be little trouble in doing that, for he could see some of the simians squatting in various trees, and moving back and forth with the utmost freedom, as though they never dreamed of danger proceeding from another species of biped.

Ballyhoo even sighted along the barrel of his rifle. His finger had commenced to feel for the trigger, and that was all the further it got, for a mighty shudder passed over him, and down went the gun.

"Shucks! I just can't do it!" he exclaimed in

disgust. "Seems too much like shooting a human being. I'm not so hungry that I could turn cannibal. Guess there must be birds I can get, or something that would seem more in my line. Hope I never will come to eating a monkey."

So he continued to watch the hosts come and go, and listen to the din of their chattering, which reminded Ballyhoo of a certain convention of town gossips he had once seen on a local stage in his home town. He was only waiting for another half hour to pass so that the last of the shadows would have departed from the forest. Somehow Ballyhoo did not like to start his wanderings again until it was broad daylight, with the sun above the horizon, and insect and animal life were once more rampant.

He wondered what his chums were thinking of his absence. Of course Philip Jenks had in due time returned to the camp, and when it was found that Ballyhoo had failed to turn up a search must have undoubtedly been commenced.

"Yes, and Oscar as well as Jack," he went on to say, reflectively, "would be able to tell from the tracks that I'd picked up that tiger cub, and been followed by the mother jaguar. Guess they'll think I was a silly, and I won't quarrel with them about that part of it. Course they'll expect to start out, and give a look around for me this morning. Same old story of the babes in the woods; but anyhow, I've been able to look out for myself."

He listened every now and then, hoping to catch



some distant shout, or it might be the feeble report of a gun. How gladly would he answer such a signal, and wait for the rescuing party to turn up.

It had come finally that Ballyhoo was ready to leave the place of his night's encampment, and strike out toward the east, under the belief that he must run upon the river in that quarter, when he heard the plain report of a gun.

How the sound thrilled him through and through. Never in all his life could he ever have discovered so much music in the common everyday discharge of a rifle or a shotgun. Then they were looking for him, and that shot had been meant to tempt an answer, if he were within range of its echoes.

So Ballyhoo fired, and instantly all the monkey chattering ceased as if by magic, though the long-tailed animals could be seen beating a ludicrous retreat in every direction, as though in a panic, and under the belief that the terrible anaconda might be responsible for that sudden crashing report.

Then the boy sat down again to wait. There was no use trying to meet the coming rescue party halfway, for in that thick growth they would be very apt to pass one another by. If he did not hear any further sign of them by half an hour he could discharge his gun again, Ballyhoo decided.

Before that time passed he heard a second shot, this time much closer. This he answered promptly

and then waited again. Finally the sound of voices came to him, accompanied by the swish of a machete slashing a passage through the matted mass of vegetation.

"Hey! Oscar—Jack!" he shouted, cupping his hands to form a megaphone.

"Ballyhoo, ahoy!" came a reassuring cry; "we're on the way. Stay where you are!"

"You bet I will," the tired boy told himself, once more settling down to wait.

To pass the time away he amused himself in deciding on his menu for the jolly breakfast he anticipated devouring when he got back to camp again. He could almost imagine he smelled the bacon frying, and see the coffee bubbling in the pot; and now it did make him sigh and count the minutes.

But there, the boys were close at hand now. Ballyhoo began to wonder if thoughtful Jack might not have fetched something to eat along with him, under the suspicion that the wanderer would be almost ravenous for food.

"I certainly hope he has," Ballyhoo told himself, eagerly, "because I don't see how I could ever hold out till we covered all that distance back to camp. Why, I'd drop over from sheer weakness before I'd gone halfway. Yes, I surely do hope Jack put some crackers and cheese in his pocket before he started out."

Well, there they came, and besides the two chums he saw Philip Jenks and the headman of the Indian helpers. Ballyhoo waved his hat, and

gave a brave shout; but to tell the truth there were tears in his eyes that he tried to wink away. Those faithful comrades certainly did look good to him, after passing such a miserable night there in the wilds of the Orinoco.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE MONKEY BRIDGE

Soon the others reached the spot, and were shaking hands with the wanderer.

"Where's the cub?" asked Oscar, looking as though he half expected to see a chubby young jaguar snugly nestling under Ballyhoo's coat.

"Oh! You found out what a silly thing I did, of course!" exploded the other turning red. "Well, I dropped the critter all right, and then had the mean luck to get caught fast in one of those dangling vines. Gee! I thought the mother cat would jump on my back, and with my gun ten feet away on the ground. But I did manage to squirm free, and fell on my gun; and after all the old lady concluded I wasn't worth bothering with, so she went away, carrying her whelp by the scruff of the neck."

"But what made you turn out, and go around, losing track of the river?" asked Oscar, which remark proved that they had certainly followed his trail.



"Oh! you see the jaguar mother had gone in the very direction I wanted to take," explained Ballyhoo, "and so I made up my mind I'd better cut stick and pass around. Well," he added, with a shrug of his shoulders, "of course I had to go and get all mixed up; but that was on account of the many places where I had to go around. What's the use of trying to gloss it over? I just got lost, and must have kept on going further and further away all the while. Then, when night began to come on, I concluded I'd better camp."

"I see you made two fires," commented Jack. "Was that to scare wild beasts away, or were you cold?"

"I did it to feel safe," admitted Ballyhoo, candidly. "All sorts of things were likely to drop in on me. Once I saw a whopping big alligator come crawling up like he wanted to make a meal of me. I shooed him off by hitting him on the snout with a chunk of wood. Guess there must be a lagoon over yonder. And there was something worse than that to come. Take a look over there, both of you!"

Of course Jack and Oscar were really startled to see the enormous snake lying stretched out amidst the grass. They could easily understand that Ballyhoo had by means of his shot smashed that big head, and brought about its death.

"Was it going to attack you?" demanded Jack, while Oscar started pacing off the length of the monster.

“Well, it acted like it meant to,” came the reply. “And I made up my mind I had a better chance to hit its swinging head while it hung down from a tree than if it was crawling along the ground at me, so I shot. Then I sat here awake the livelong night, expecting its mate would show up, sooner or later.”

“Twenty-three feet, and a little over,” announced Oscar, triumphantly. “That surely is some snake, Ballyhoo. And it’s a mighty good thing he didn’t get a chance to throw those folds around you.”

“But tell me, Jack, have you such a thing as a bite in your pocket, for I’m almost famished right now?” pleaded the prodigal chum.

It turned out that wise, thoughtful Jack had done just what Ballyhoo suspected, for he now drew forth a “snack,” which he had thrust into his pocket before quitting the camp. The hungry boy pounced on it, and commenced tearing huge fragments off as if he had not eaten a morsel in a whole week.

Later on they started back again. Professor Yardley would be very anxious to know whether their hunt had met with any success; though possibly the sound of the shots may have reached his ears, and conveyed something of the joyous truth.

In due time they arrived at the river bank. Ballyhoo lost not a single minute, but started getting himself some breakfast. His tongue ran on while thus engaged, and he told his comrades all

about the "monkey school" he had seen convene there in the forest, with the elders pointing out to the attentive youngsters what their most terrible enemy, the scaly monster of an anaconda, looked like.

"Oh! you missed one of the biggest pictures going, Jack," he told the photographer of the expedition, "when you failed to be on hand and catch that comical set. It would have brought the house down every time, some of 'em did such ridiculous stunts."

"Let's hope another chance may come along," was Jack's philosophical response; "but hold on, Ballyhoo, you're starting to cook enough for ten men."

"Well, I feel like ten men," grinned the other, "as far as capacity goes."

In the end he gorged himself until he could hardly breathe.

"Huh!" he grunted, "guess we didn't save much by my missing two meals, after all. But I'm feeling prime now, and ready to go on when the professor says the word."

Sitting in a canoe meant no exertion, which was a fortunate thing, because really Ballyhoo would have been incapable of doing any walking after all that gorging.

"Better for me to be stuffing myself this way than stuffing that anaconda!" he ventured to say, with a little shudder, as he remembered the size of the reptile's mouth when the jaws were fully distended.

It became evident that they were now close to the junction of the smaller river with the broader Orinoco. Observations taken from time to time convinced the professor that the stream they had been ascending must really be one of the numerous outlets or mouths comprising the delta of the Orinoco, although this fact would always be subject to doubt; for during the rainy season they understood that the current often set *toward* the river, as though it might be a branch or feeder.

"It's one of the marvels of this land of many mysteries," the professor said when talking over the matter with the others. "A river that flows both ways is something you could hardly expect to find outside of a fairy tale; yet here it is beyond a doubt. By tonight I expect we'll be looking on the Orinoco itself, and after that the land of the orchids will soon be reached."

His prophecy turned out true, and two days later he was revelling in such riches of plant life as he had hardly dreamed could exist. He secured dozens of the most exquisite orchids, of hues and shapes never before seen by the eye of an enthusiast. Already the plant hunter was more than satisfied with the fruits of his labors, and ready to call the expedition a huge success.

Nor was he the only pleased one. Young Jenks too was securing a multitude of specimens of birds, many of which he believed might turn out to be as yet unclassified. If only he could carry



his prizes safely back to Washington he knew that the whole scientific world would acclaim his enterprise.

Then there was ambitious Jack. He too had been picking up wonderful bits of strikingly interesting scenes, all characteristic of such a rich tropical country as that bordering the Orinoco. Besides the scenery he succeeded in catching numerous other motion pictures of animal and bird life in that wonderful country.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing that he was enabled to secure came one day as they were in camp at a point where quite a deep little stream poured its flood into the wide river.

They had heard a great chattering at some little distance back, as though a colony of monkeys might be moving through the treetops. Professor Yardley hazarded the opinion that they were moving from one section of country to another, where perhaps living promised to be easier for the families, the nut crop being more generous.

"If you listen," he went on to say shortly afterwards, "you will find that they are coming this way. Their usual method of travel is among the treetops, for they seldom move on the ground. And inside half an hour they'll find themselves confronted by this small stream that they will have to cross."

"But can monkeys swim?" asked Ballyhoo; "for **how** else could they get across, as it's far too **wide** a gap to allow any jumping, I should say."

"Wait and see," the man of science told him; "and I'd advise Jack here to make sure that he has a fresh roll of films in his camera, so he can immortalize the whole operation. Unless I miss my guess it will be well worth our waiting even an hour or two to see."

Jack, impressed by these words, proceeded to get his camera adjusted and in readiness for immediate work. Ballyhoo thought he knew considerable about the ingenious ways of monkeys in general, but for the life of him he could not guess how that entire colony, numbering perhaps fifty members old and young, meant to cross over the stream dryshod.

"There doesn't seem to be any leaning tree that they could use for a bridge," he finally remarked.

"Oh! sometimes there are other bridges than those afforded by trees," laughed the professor; "and now watch what happens, for I can see some of the older monkeys have arrived."

The comical animals were doing a great deal of running up and down the trees, all the while scolding and chattering furiously. Finally one stout chap dropped down from a limb high up at a certain place. He hung by his tail head down. Jack of course was already busily engaged turning his crank, for he realized that the remarkable happening mentioned by Professor Yardley was about to take place.

A second strong monkey dropped down, fastened his tail about the body of the first, and also hung

suspended. Others succeeded until there was a chain of a dozen dangling there.

"Oh, look!" exclaimed Ballyhoo, trembling with eagerness, "they're beginning to get a move on. Now they're starting to swing out and back again like a pendulum to a clock. Why, what d'ye think of that!—they're aiming to swing right across the creek, and let that lowest chap grab a limb of that big tree over there."

Which it turned out was exactly what the clever monkeys meant to do; and right there before the astonished boys they completed their bridge. Across this living arch the others now commenced to cross, mothers often carrying their babies on their backs, and presenting one of the most remarkable sights ever beheld by mortal man.

"I never would have believed it if I hadn't seen the thing with my own eyes!" Ballyhoo declared, wild with delight. "Oh! just look at some of the sly chaps in the living bridge, nipping at the feet of the others passing over. They're as full of mischief as an egg is of meat, for a fact. There, that mother smacked one right in the face, and hear him jabber, will you? If he let go his hold, wouldn't there be an *awful* splash, though?"

"No danger of that," the professor told him. "They'll hold like steel until the last of the colony is across."

"But how can the monkeys forming the living chain get over?" demanded Ballyhoo.

"That one over on this side will let go with his tail, when the chain will swing across. One or two

may get wet, but those old chaps stationing themselves down below mean to look after them, you can depend. They attend to every particular, and leave nothing to chance work."

This was the critical period, and the jabbering and screeching increased in vigor. Finally the end monkey allowed his tail to slip free from the limb to which it had clung so tenaciously despite the great strain.

There was a downward swoop, and that individual as well as the next two in the chain fell into the stream, where they struggled desperately, and with the assistance of many helpers presently managed to gain dry land.

After that the whole troop went gaily off through the treetops, bound for some new foraging ground, which their spies had discovered, and which promised to supply them with an abundance of nuts.

"Did you get it all in, Jack?" asked Ballyhoo, solicitously, "because that's going to turn out the cream piece of the whole business, mark me. Why, people will nearly take a fit to see those monkeys carry on like a lot of clowns and acrobats."

Jack assured him that so far as he knew he had secured the entire happening, and as the light was especially good he believed the picture would be a masterpiece.

They continued on their way, and that night again camped alongside the broad and mysterious Orinoco. Far and near the banks of this stream were covered with a dense vegetation.



Professor Yardley daily and almost hourly ran across new and delightful surprises in the shape of fauna that had never before been mentioned by any of those daring souls who, taking their lives in their hands, had ventured to penetrate this almost untrodden wilderness.

Once they had actually come upon the sad ruins of what seemed to have been a lonely outpost of civilization. Some white man, possibly a Portuguese planter who wanted to get away from the society of all his fellows, for some reason or other, had built him a shack, and planted oranges as well as bananas near a grove of Brazil nut trees. Long years ago he had died, and his shack was hidden by the rank growth of vegetation. Still, the travelers were grateful for the oranges they managed to find on the old and uncared-for trees. The clearing had gone back to a state of nature again, and only for those orange trees no one would have dreamed that a gash had once been made in the wilderness.

Desirous of resting and making the most of the riches which the neighborhood afforded in the way of prizes for the collections of both the professor and young Jenks, they spent several days in camp here.

Then one afternoon, while the boys were taking it easy, and secretly wishing it was time for starting on the return trip, the headman of the Indians came hurriedly into camp. When Ballyhoo saw how he ran to where the professor was sitting working at the most recent additions to his col-

lection of orchids, he seemed to sense some sort of sudden danger. And as he scrambled to his feet both Jack and Oscar, noticing his action, also left their seats and stood erect.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE FLIGHT DOWN THE ORINOCO

"THERE's something gone crooked, that's sure," Ballyhoo said. "Notice how the old headman waves his hands, and how excited he looks. There, you can see some of the others are listening now to what he's saying, and they show signs of fear by the way they turn to look at the forest. I wonder what's going to happen?"

"Well, the professor is beckoning to us, so we'll soon know what's up," observed Jack, after which the three of them hurried to join the older explorer.

"We must get away from here in a hurry, boys," said Professor Yardley, gravely, as the trio reached his side. "The one thing that I feared most of all has happened. I had the boss guide and two of his men make trips about the country while we stayed here, with an object in view. He brings me the startling news just now that there is a village of the natives not many miles away from us, just out of gunshot, I suppose, for up to the present they haven't discovered our presence; but they know it now."

"Then it is an unfriendly tribe, you mean, sir?" remarked Oscar.

"My man tells me the most bitter enemy of the whites in the whole region of the Orinoco," replied the other, seriously. "When our guide spied on the native village he found the Indians greatly excited, and indulging in a war dance; for these natives down here, just like our own Indians up in the Northern Hemisphere, always go through a lot of gymnastics calculated to make them savage for fight, before they start out on the warpath."

"Then that means pack up and get, does it, sir?" continued Oscar.

"Without a minute's delay," he was told. "I'm worried because Philip happens to be off somewhere at this time. If he delays his return to camp an hour or two it may cost us all dear."

Being lads of action the three of them started to pack their possessions. The head man had apparently been given his orders, for he was already driving his men to work.

Just then, greatly to the delight of all, the familiar figure of young Philip Jenks came in sight. Of course he was amazed to see them all working so furiously, but upon being told what it meant, he, too, started in. He had more or less to do, in order to save his priceless collection of rare bird skins, most of which had been rubbed with arsenic to preserve them, and packed in the smallest possible space, so as to take little room in the boat.

"Leave the tents," said the professor, as one



of the boys was about to commence taking the khaki canvas coverings down.

"Do you mean we will abandon them, sir?" asked Ballyhoo, astonished.

"Yes, we can't take the time to get them, or give them room in the boats," explained the gentleman. "They are beginning to leak in heavy rains, and are unreliable. Besides, I imagine they may deceive the savages, and make them think we're still in camp here. An hour saved in that way may be our salvation."

The bundles were hastily thrust into the boats and stowed. By this time they had found the easiest possible way of packing their stuff, and everything had its place.

"All ready?" asked Professor Yardley, looking keenly about him to make sure that nothing might have been neglected or forgotten.

Receiving an affirmative reply from all hands, he gave the signal, and immediately the boats shot out into the broad stream. It was only the part of wisdom for them to cross over to the opposite side, though the professor did intimate that he believed the enemy would come to the attack partly in boats, and could thus follow the fugitives.

Eagerly the boys turned their heads to look back and across the river as long as they could catch a glimpse of the two brown tents. They hardly liked the idea of leaving those comfortable shelters behind them, knowing how greatly the tents would be missed if a storm came on; but apparently the professor had a good reason for

doing this. If the fact of the tents being there gave the Indians to believe their intended prey still lay in the camp, the sacrifice might be well worth while.

"Nothing doing so far," commented Ballyhoo, after a bit, "and as we're going to turn this bend here we'll lose sight of the camp from now on."

They saw no sign of any moving figures as long as they glimpsed the brown khaki tents. Then the bend was turned, and the boys no longer twisted their heads around, because there was no further use.

Less than an hour later there came borne to their ears on the breeze that was blowing downstream a significant series of savage cries. The boys exchanged uneasy looks, and as usual it was Ballyhoo who first of all had his say.

"They've found out that we flew the coop!" he remarked, with something of his usual humor, though perhaps this was partly assumed, for none of them could be feeling very well satisfied with the conditions just then. "Now I wonder if they'll want to come chasing along after us. We never harmed any of them, so why should they act ugly toward us?"

"It may be," said Professor Yardley, "that years ago some rascally Portuguese who were looking about this part of the country searching for gold acted treacherously toward these people. Since that time, feeling that all whites must be of the same false stripe, they have hated the species, and the knowledge of our com-

ing has made them wild for revenge. I am afraid they will try to overtake us, and bring on a general fight."

"Let's hope," ventured Jack, who feared for the safety of his precious films about as much as he did for his own life, "that they rest satisfied with having, as they believe, chased us out of their country."

"Anyway," added Ballyhoo, "with night drawing on we ought to be able to give them the slip. Of course, if it comes to a real show-down, we've got to fight. I'd hate the worst kind to shoot a poor Indian who doesn't know any better than to believe I mean to do him harm; but it might be Hobson's choice, you know. If I got my back up against a rock so I couldn't run, with several Indians rushing me with machetes that they meant to use carving me all up, why, I'd have to shut my eyes and shoot—I mean that figuratively speaking, you understand."

He immediately commenced an investigation in connection with the amount of ammunition he chanced to have in his belt, and also in his pockets. The result seemed to give Ballyhoo more or less gratification, for he nodded his head, and allowed a little grin to creep over his face, though that sign of amusement quickly disappeared again.

"Do you mean to keep on running down the river after dark comes, sir?" asked Oscar, when another half hour had passed.

"I have been trying to figure on what would be

safest for us," replied the professor, thoughtfully. "The current is swift, and there are many ugly snags which, if we ran upon them in the night, would be apt to wreck our boats. I don't believe it is wise to try such a course, unless we are absolutely compelled to go on."

The boys were not sorry to hear him say this, for they had been casting uneasy glances at the water, and wondering what terrible thing might happen to them in case of a spill. What with alligators, electric eels, savage fish that would attack them by scores and hundreds, as well as perhaps other dangers just as real, the possibility of being thrown into the water was anything but cheerful.

"There's what looks like a good camp ground, sir!" called out Jack just then, and as it also seemed to appeal to the professor the order was given to land.

Luckily there was a thick growth of rushes growing along the shore, in which the boats could easily be concealed.

"Only make one track going in," called out the professor; and guessing what his object must be the boys saw to it that the Indians handling the paddles so dextrously fell in single line.

Then as they were in shallow water several of the latter, carrying out orders given by the sagacious headman, jumped overboard, and going back along their late course drew the reeds together again. Thus all trace of their having forced a passage through these was concealed.



Ballyhoo watched this being done with considerable interest, as in fact all of them did, not anticipating meeting with such a plain display of woodcraft down in a South American country.

"It only goes to show," Ballyhoo told Jack, on drawing his attention to what was going on, "how these savage people, no matter whether you find them in North America, Darkest Africa, the wilds of Australia, or right here along the wonderful old Orinoco, all possess the same sense of strategy that they get from the fox and the hyena and the jaguar—yes, and the kangaroo too, mebbe, for all I know."

One thing all of them understood, which was that there would be no cheery camp-fire lighted that night. Until they had managed to get clear of the country looked upon as their hunting ground by this particular tribe of Indians it would be a most unwise thing to show a beacon calculated to draw attention to their resting place.

They lay around there taking what comfort they could. Food had been distributed, so that no one went hungry. Of course this consisted for the most part of stale crackers, cheese, and some dried meat which Ballyhoo loved to call "pemmican" just because he knew that the jerked venison of the Wild West often went under that name, and somehow he liked to roll the word over his tongue as a sweet morsel.

As the three boys, together with Philip Jenks and the man of science, had purposely "foregath-

ered" together, they were able to talk as they pleased, always remembering to modulate their voices so that their tones were hardly more than whispers.

"What do you think of our chances for getting through without being discovered, sir?" Jack was asking.

"They are about fifty-fifty, I should say," came the far from reassuring reply. "We have taken all the precautions possible, but still in spite of everything we may be found out. These Indians are very crafty, and one of them may have seen us coming along the river. But we'll hope for the best, even while preparing for the worst."

"And if we're discovered, do we shoot to fetch down our game?" Ballyhoo demanded, trying to keep his voice firm, for he did not fancy having the others know that the prospect of such a thing appalled him.

"Only as a very last resort would I sanction anything like that," said Professor Yardley. "I have a little plan that I mean to put into practice. It may work splendidly, and then again it is apt to prove an arrant failure, when we would be compelled to depend on what execution we could do with our firearms, in order to insure our safety."

"Would our men stand by us, do you think, sir?" asked Oscar, softly.

"Yes, I believe they would, for they seem to be fairly decent fellows," replied the gentleman, confidently. "I have told the headman to inform them that for the balance of the trip their wages will

be doubled. That was a good idea of yours, Oscar, and your generosity may pay us well."

"But please tell us about this little trick you say you've got up your sleeve, Professor Yardley?" asked Ballyhoo, showing a decided interest.

## CHAPTER XIV

### LYING IN AMBUSH

THEY heard Professor Yardley laughing softly to himself, as though amused over something. Consequently none of the boys felt very much surprised to hear him say:

“First of all I ought to tell you that long ago, when I was rather young, I had quite another hobby besides natural history, and the study of plant life in some of the most inaccessible regions of the earth. I don’t suppose any of you could give a coherent guess as to the direction my youthful aspirations took, so I’ll have to tell you that I envied the matchless Houdini his stage magic, In fact I was quite resolved to make a wizard of myself, and do wonderful stunts calculated to mystify an audience.”

He laughed again, as though even the recollection amused him.

“It is surprising how these ambitions of boyhood days follow us in later years, as if the ghost of the past refuses to down. And sometimes they can be put to a practical use, as I intend this one



shall. You see I have even gone so far as to carry around with me a certain little box of marvels. Small enough though it is to almost go in my vest pocket, nevertheless it holds mighty forces.

"Being a humane man, and much averse to taking human life, even that of a savage, I made up my mind that there were other ways besides violence through which a shrewd man might awe a riotous mob of ignorant natives. In other words, I aimed in case of necessity to play upon their superstition."

"I can see what you are aiming at, sir," declared Oscar, with emphasis, "and I must say it sounds good to me. All savage people are full of superstition. I've often read how the Indians are believers in spirits from the other world; and that they think their medicine men talk with a manitou when they go through their mummeries."

"You hit the nail squarely on the head when you say that, Oscar," the professor told him. "There never was a tribe of blacks or Indians on the face of the globe but that they believed in their fetish, and feared some unknown power that they could not see. Well, I've got a little scheme arranged by means of which I hope to give these Indians the fright of their lives, if they threaten to come down on us."

"I hope, though, sir," ventured Jack, "that it isn't so terrible it will scare our own men out of their seven senses. If they took to their heels and left us in the lurch we'd be in a bad pickle."

"I'm meaning to explain it all to the headman, and have him tell the rest," the professor announced. "And as there's no telling just how much time I'll have to get ready in, perhaps I'd better be starting now."

He left them, and went toward the boats, for most of the cargoes had been allowed to remain just as they were compactly stowed away. This was done purposely so as to be in condition for a sudden departure, should any necessity for such a hurried flitting arise.

"That sounds as if we might be treated to something along the line of comedy," Jack was saying, after he and the four others had been left alone. "Who'd ever dream that a man as serious as the professor could have a vein of humor deep down in his heart? After all there's a heap of truth in the old saying that a man is only a grown-up child, and every once in a while he betrays it in spite of all the polish, learning and culture have given him."

"I wonder what he's going to do?" speculated Ballyhoo, who couldn't make even a guess to save him.

"You'll have to wait till he comes back, and then we'll all know," Oscar told the impatient one, though for that matter he was almost as anxious himself as Ballyhoo could be to hear the details.

Some little time elapsed. Possibly the professor found it more or less difficult to discover just what he was looking for, since he dared not strike

a light. He did have a small pocket electric torch, which he seldom used, since he wished to conserve the precious battery; and they finally began to catch fugitive gleams from this light moving in zigzag lines, as he hunted through the cargo in one of the guarded boats.

Then presently they knew he was coming back. It was too dark there under the trees to tell what manner of bundle the savant might be carrying; though evidently from the character of his promise it could not be along the line of his studies in plant lore.

"Strange as it happens, there are exactly four of them in all, one apiece for you, boys," he told them. "As for me, I expect to have my hands fully occupied with other matters about the time I'll call on you to break loose."

Ballyhoo gave evidence of his astonishment when his fingers closed upon the object the gentleman had placed in his keeping.

"Why, as sure as shooting it feels just like one of those long tin horns we use on Hallowe'en night, and at our football games, so as to make the worst lot of noise going!" was what he exclaimed.

"You've guessed it, Ballyhoo!" chuckled the professor, who seemed to be enjoying the affair as much as though he were renewing his youth. "They are tin horns, and capable of emitting the most discordant sounds that ever grated on the human tympanum. I expect you every one to blow for all you are worth when I say the word. If

the racket you can put up isn't enough to chill the fighting blood in the veins of any Orinoco Indian that ever lived, I'm greatly mistaken. But all this noise is only intended to be an accompaniment; there is something more than that I'm planning to produce."

"The plot thickens," was all Ballyhoo whispered to himself; and it could be easily surmised that he was greatly pleased with the idea.

"In nearly all cases," continued the professor, "where the ignorance and superstition of natives is intended to be worked upon, red fire, a handful of common fireworks, and possibly some phosphorescent paint is calculated to do the job. I have all of them handy. They have served my purpose more than once in the past, and I hope will not fail us now."

"Please tell us just what we are to do, then, sir," urged Jack, wondering if it could be at all possible to make any sort of picture of the show, and then regretfully deciding that such a thing was against reason, much as he would have liked to try it.

Accordingly the gentleman went into particulars, and it could be seen from his precise way of explaining even the minutest details how he had had this queer scheme mapped out in his mind long before. Doubtless its contemplation, to be used in case of dire necessity, may have caused him no end of secret amusement, recalling as it did those early days in his own life, when he used to exert his



powers as a stage magician to playfully hoodwink a gaping audience.

First of all the Indian attendants were to be kept out of sight, as well as all signs calculated to betray the fact that the white invaders were hiding at that spot.

Then each of the boys was supplied with a horn, and instructed how to use it on signal from the professor.

"When the time is ripe we'll give these chaps the scare of their lives, that's dead sure," Ballyhoo boasted, as he put his horn to his mouth to see how it felt.

"Be careful, Ballyhoo!" warned Jack, fearful lest the other might let out a trial blare that would "take the edge" off the entertainment. "Don't give even a peep ahead of time. It might spoil the game, you know."

"Don't be afraid, Jack, I didn't mean to try my bugle, but just wanted to find if it fitted my lips. Everything seems O.K. as far as I can see. Now let the Philistines come along, if they're hankering for a shock, that's all."

After that they fell silent for a time. It was really no time for talking unless an actual necessity arose. But lying there behind that thick screen of bushes the three boys and Philip Jenks continued to keep their ears busy listening for some sign of the approach of the enemy, and of course all the while hoping the peril might pass them by.

Professor Yardley had crept away, doubtless to

give the last orders to his headman, who in turn would communicate it to the carriers, so that they might not fall into a panic and flee madly when things reached the boiling state.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE SERPENTS IN THE SKY

"LISTEN to the night birds calling all around us," whispered Ballyhoo, in the ear of Oscar, some time afterwards.

"Those are not birds," came the thrilling reply in the lowest of tones, with Oscar's lips close to his ear. "They are signals made by some of these Indians. They must suspect that we're around this region, and right now they are closing in on us from several sides."

"I'm sure I heard a sound out on the river just then," Jack added, also cautiously, "that may have been a paddle striking the side of a dugout boat. So they're coming down on us by water as well!"

Ballyhoo only let his breath pass between his lips in a sibilant hiss, but it was like the escape valve that allows steam to go forth when the boiler is overcharged.

The minutes passed, every one heavy with suspense. Those queer bird-like calls continued to rise, now here, again there, as though each had a

peculiar significance. Undoubtedly these untutored savages of the Orinoco wilds had a method of communication which was carried on by these natural sounds. So well imitated were the birds of the forest that many who considered themselves fair woodsmen might have been deceived; though they may have come to the conclusion that the owls and night hawks, as well as other species of nocturnal birds, were unusually noisy on that particular occasion.

"There're getting closer all the time," muttered the uneasy Ballyhoo. "I hope now the professor won't leave the opening chorus go too long."

"Be ready!" warned Oscar, who had his tin horn close to his lips, and was in a condition to draw in a long, full breath at a second's notice.

Then all at once there sprang into existence a dazzling red light that shot a terrifying glow around the entire vicinity. That was the signal they had been expecting for some time. Ballyhoo thought it was long past overdue, since he had been burning with zeal to commence blowing his horn for some time now.

Doubtless these boys had had more or less experience on election nights and similar occasions. They may also have belonged to the strong-lunged squad to whom the duty of creating a noise is given by the cheer captain at the annual football school games. At any rate they quickly proved that they were past masters in the art of getting



all the dismal sounds out of tin contraptions that could ever be imagined.

When that awful chorus broke forth all other noises of the night stopped short. In fact every animal or bird within half a mile of that spot must have quaked with sudden fear, and either departed to safer regions or else cowered down on its perch or in its lair.

Other things were happening at the same time, for the professor was a busy man. From the shelter of the bushes that screened him he must have put a match to one of those pieces of fireworks of which he had spoken, for there was a sudden roaring sound, a scattering of sparks, and then straight up into the air rose a fiery monster that vaulted toward the distant heavens.

How the eyes of those terrified savages must have followed the course of that rocket as it cut its fiery way aloft, made a graceful curve when it attained the limit of its flight, and then burst forth a mass of magnificent red and blue balls, each of which commenced to zigzag downward as though held by a parachute, which was possibly the case.

Nothing that the human mind could conceive would be more apt to frighten an ignorant Indian than such an exhibition of supreme power. To his untutored mind this must be the incarnation of spiritual power; the Great Manitou was speaking through all this horrible din and these amazing flashing lights.

Oscar wondered how it would succeed, but he

did not have to bother his mind for any great length of time. Already they could hear the pattering of hastily retreating footsteps. The Indians had commenced to run, and their departure lacked every element of caution that may have marked their secret coming.

The flight soon became a panic. They could be heard dashing madly along, and it might be set down as certain that once this eagerness to escape seized upon their hearts nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of their going. Many crashed into trees that were unseen in the general scramble. In the direction of the river the boys also heard much loud splashing, which seemed to indicate that those nearest the water had in their fright plunged recklessly in.

Cries and screams coming from this quarter soon afterwards told that some of these adventurous souls had been attacked by alligators, or those savage fish which Ballyhoo held in such awe.

Taken altogether it was a riot of noise and confusion such as the three Motion Picture Comrades had never experienced before. They were fully aroused, and felt their hearts pounding against their ribs with the excitement; but at the time none of them knew whether they were more inclined to be filled with silent laughter on account of the ludicrous nature of the affair, or feel compassion for those unfortunates who were having such a rough time of it in the river.

By degrees, however, all this noise was dying

out. The boys themselves had stopped blowing their horns, partly because their breath was well nigh exhausted through persistent efforts for such a long space of time. The red fire too was dying out, though the professor had sent up another rocket, this time spitting forth a sheaf of writhing yellow serpents that must have added to the fears of the fleeing wretches.

Gradually the sounds ceased. Those in the water had perhaps been able to scramble ashore—at least the boys hoped so; while the runners on land had managed to get to some distance, where they could come together again, and depart, to carry the fearful news back to their village.

It was certain that the night would be free from all further alarms. Nothing on earth could tempt any of those copper-colored natives to approach that spot again; and in all likelihood it would be shunned for many moons as a place of evil reputation.

"Well, it's all over," said Ballyhoo, with something bordering on a sigh, as if he had actually enjoyed the queer entertainment, tinged with danger though it may have been.

"I'm going to ask the professor to let me keep this horn to remember it by," was what Jack remarked. "Oh! what a dandy picture this would have made, and how sorry I am it couldn't be taken. It does seem to me as if some of the finest chances for stunning effects are lost by their happening in the night time."

Ballyhoo had something else on his mind, and

as usual he considered it his duty to communicate the same to his companions.

“Say, d’ye know I never dreamed when I used to hear our preacher read how those old worthies went round and round a hundred times, blowing their rams’ horns, ’till the noise made the walls of Jericho fall down, that the time’d come when I’d be doing something like that myself. It’s a bully good horn, too, and I’d like to keep it, same as you, Jack. Say a good word for me to the professor, please, when you hold him up for yours.”

“What’s all this about?” asked a voice, and then the four were joined by the man of science. “I hope you are not picking flaws in the little entertainment I got up in such a hurry, to start those poor wretches back home, where their wives were waiting for them? What did you think of it, boys?”

If what they told him was any criterion by which their opinion might be gauged, the professor had reason for being satisfied. He seemed to be almost as pleased as any of the boys, for every now and then he would laugh softly to himself when mention was made of some particular feature in the mad flight of the enemy.

“One thing certain,” he finally remarked, seriously, “while the whole affair was of a nature to hardly reflect credit on a man of my supposed scientific attainments, at least it accomplished what it was intended for. And certainly it was much more humane to give those poor Indians a



little fright than to have opened on them with our murderous guns, and maimed many of them, perhaps killed others. I know I shall sleep easier tonight on account of my choice."

## CHAPTER XVI

### FLYING BEFORE THE STORM

It turned out that none of their native carriers had fled as a result of seeing those strange things, which however must have impressed them deeply. Nevertheless, as it afterwards proved, the headman himself had found it difficult to restrain some of the more frightened among them. Doubtless they had buried their heads in the grass so as to shut out the terrible vision of that serpent speeding toward the heavens, to speak in thunder tones when on high, and scatter those fiery darts broadcast.

But it was all over now, and gradually they could gain the mastery over their fears, so that sleep might be wooed.

Nothing else happened during that never-to-be-forgotten night. All of them were glad to see the coming of dawn, when the voyage down the Orinoco was to be resumed after breakfast.

Since there was no longer the least danger from savages, Ballyhoo rejoiced in the fact that they could have something "decent" to eat, as well as a cup of fragrant Java.

"I miss my coffee more than anything else," he complained. "Seems like the day hasn't been started right when I have to go without one cup of the berry juice."

"Shows what a slave to drink you're getting to be," laughed Oscar. "Better break away from such bad habits before it's too late, Ballyhoo."

"Oh! I am—gradually," smirked the other; "you remember I didn't have a drop last night, don't you?"

All the same every one of them enjoyed a hot breakfast, being blessed with good appetites. Then the boats were launched, and loaded as usual. While all of them were of the opinion that they would see nothing further of the hostile natives, still common discretion urged that they first of all cross to the other side of the wide river, and continue down near the further shore.

"We happen to know that their village is on this side of the stream," said the professor, while they talked the matter over at breakfast; "and the chances are none of that tribe can be found across the Orinoco. These various tribes are as a rule at war with one another, and consequently never roam far away from certain regions supposed to be their particular hunting grounds. When they feel fiercely disposed, and long to engage in war, all they have to do is to invade the area belonging to some rival crowd, when the poisoned arrows and darts fly."

Once they started the men at the oars worked the boats across the stream. Naturally the boys

cast a few anxious glances back toward the shore they were just leaving. It looked very forbidding, with its heavy vegetation that overhung the water, and might for all they knew shelter some enemies bolder than their fellows.

Ballyhoo entertained a peculiar aversion for those long blowguns, with which he had watched that Indian bring down a bird from the top of a lofty tree. And if, as he had been told, they poisoned the tips of such darts as were to be used in warfare with fellow humans, it was not very pleasant to contemplate being struck by such a deadly missile.

He breathed more easily when he figured that the boats had finally reached such a distance from the hostile shore that a successful shot with a blowgun would be out of the question.

"And," he admitted privately to himself, under his breath, "I'd be even happier if the old river was about five miles wide instead of a measly half."

Once across they found that the conditions there did not differ to any appreciable extent from what they had been accustomed to. Pretty much the same class of thick tropical vegetation covered the shores, while trees in places overhung the water, in the branches of which the quick eye of the experienced plant hunter often detected magnificent specimens of orchids; while on his part Phil Jenks several times found opportunities for using his light shotgun in order to secure a rare bird he coveted.



The day proved to be an unusually scorching one. Under the shade afforded by the flimsy canvas covers which were raised to partly protect them from the cruel burning heat of the sun the boys lay, and fairly panted as noon arrived. It was so unmercifully hot that even the professor, much as he wished to get out of this region now that his object had been attained, felt that they would be taking unnecessary chances if they tried to keep on.

"We'll go ashore, and spend a couple of hours resting," he announced, presently, as he saw Ballyhoo mopping his face and neck with his once red bandanna.

"Bully for that!" exclaimed that worthy, grinning; "it isn't a very long time to knock around, of course, but then I've always been told half a loaf is better than no bread. Thank you kindly, Professor, for remembering that we might melt away if we kept on out in this glare."

"Along about two o'clock," continued the other, "there's a likelihood of some relief, for I notice clouds coming up over yonder."

"They look pretty black in the bargain," observed Jack.

"We're just as likely to get a big storm after such a stunning hot day," prophesied Ballyhoo, also looking carefully toward the horizon, where the bank of clouds could be plainly seen.

There was no breeze stirring, or so faint a breath of air that it counted for nothing, so that even when they found themselves under the shade

of the trees it did not prove so very comfortable, after all.

While they munched some lunch, and tried to take things as easy as possible, of course they exchanged opinions on many subjects.

"I hope now, Jack," Ballyhoo at one time remarked, as though more or less concerned over the matter, "you've got that case of films wrapped up so it'll be waterproof in case a cloudburst strikes us. I'd hate the worst kind to have anything happen now to ruin all your hard work."

"You can make your mind easy on that score," he was told. "I'm not one of those shiftless fellows who wait until the horse is stolen before they lock the barn door. That box is said to be air and moisture proof in itself. I had it made according to my own specifications, and have given it a good test long ago. Then, besides, I keep it well wrapped in oilskins. It could float in a boat half filled with water, and in no way injure the contents."

"Glad to hear that," laughed Ballyhoo, who possibly knew the facts before, but just wanted to get a "rise" out of Jack.

When they once more entered the boats and started on down the river the sun at times hid his scorching face behind masses of clouds. As yet, however, they could detect no positive signs of the storm that brooded.

"I only hope it holds off a couple of hours or so," the professor called out after Oscar had

drawn attention to the fact that the clouds were growing denser far down toward the horizon. "I say that because I've got a nice place picked out for our night camp, and one particularly adapted to a stormy period."

He would not enter into particulars, contenting himself with saying they would find out all about it sooner or later, if fortunate enough to get far enough along before compelled to land, either through the breaking of the storm or the gathering of darkness.

Knowing that the man of science was great on "preparedness," Oscar could easily understand that he must have taken particular notice of the lay of the land on this side of the river while they were ascending; and made a mental note of certain characteristics that might serve travelers well in an emergency.

Ballyhoo, who was in the same boat with Jack at the time, confided some more of his griefs to the other.

"Here's where we're going to miss those khaki tents the worst kind, I'm afraid," he went on to say, disconsolately. "It's true they were getting pretty rotten, and not much so far as looks went, being faded and old; but any port in a storm; and lying under one of those canvas shelters would be a heap better than sticking it out in the open, with a gale whooping things up, and the rain coming down like pitchforks."

"Oh! I don't know about that," Jack replied. "In such a storm I'm afraid our tents would have

split into tatters, or else broken away, and gone off like kites. Leave things to the professor; he can be trusted to look out for our comfort, given a fair amount of time."

One hour passed, and they were well on the way with the second. Then the first distant growl of thunder smote on their hearing.

"She's on the way, all right," said Ballyhoo, frowning, and looking toward the shore reflectively, just as though he might be mentally figuring whether a fellow could swim that short distance in a hurry, should the boat be filled with water in a tropical downpour.

The thunder gradually grew louder. In the distance, too, they began to see vivid flashes, as the chain lightning shot downward, cutting the atmosphere in zigzag lines. Not a breath of air was in circulation, and the rowers were bathed in perspiration from their violent efforts. Still the headman urged them to do even better, having received his instructions from the professor.

Ballyhoo found himself fairly fascinated by those amazing splashes of fire that preceded each and every roll of thunder. He thought he had seen some dazzling displays in the past, but none of them could begin to compare with what he was now witnessing. At times he started and gave utterance to a gasp as some unusually blinding demonstration took place.

"This is sure going to be a corker of a storm, take it from me, Jack," he told his fellow voyager,



trying at the same time to appear cool and collected, as if his nerves were not all on edge with apprehensions.

"The professor is getting anxious too," said Jack. "He is looking closely at the shore right along now, and I only hope he begins to recognize that likely place for a camp he mentioned."

"Whew! I hope it's going to turn out to be a cyclone cave," Ballyhoo admitted, after a ferocious burst of thunder that made the very atmosphere seem to quiver, had gradually died away in short rumbles.

Just then the professor was heard calling.

"Here's the place I was heading for, boys!" he told them; "make straight in, and run the boats up on that little beach, which looks as if it had been formed especially for landing."

Joyfully they obeyed when the order had been given by the headman to the native rowers; and three minutes afterwards the boys leaped ashore, though with cramped limbs, on account of sitting for several hours.

## CHAPTER XVII

### WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

"GET a hustle on, boys!" called Ballyhoo, as he bent over to seize upon his gun, wrapped in a waterproof case, and then his clothes-bag afterwards.

There seemed need of considerable haste, because the breaking out of the storm could not be long delayed. Jack had snatched up his camera, while Oscar looked after the box containing the films, both most precious packages in their estimation.

Meanwhile Philip Jenks was thrusting his bundles of carefully preserved bird skins into the charge of some of the Indian attendants, who, drilled by the headman, knew just what was expected of them at such a landing time.

They started up the shore, following after the tall figure of the professor, who, bending forward as he advanced, seemed to be anxiously looking ahead of him. Then those still down on the beach heard his cry of delight.

"All right, boys; we've struck the spot I had in

mind. Fetch your stuff up in a hurry, for you'll not have any too much time."

Accordingly they commenced climbing the bank. Once up there they soon located the shelter which Professor Yardley had had in mind when directing their flight down the river.

A series of strange formations of rock ran along, just forty feet or so back of the elevated shore line. These must have struck the eye of the man of science as worthy of notice when passed in the daytime. He had also judged that as they formed a positive shelf, with plenty of room underneath, the cavities would make ideal shelters from a storm. And it was odd to find how useful this knowledge came in just when they were greatly in need of some cover for their persons and possessions, with a storm about to break.

Crawling underneath the shelving rock, they soon deposited their burdens where by no possibility could any rain reach them, even though driven before a harsh wind.

Some of the men came staggering up bearing heavy loads on their heads. Others, under the direction of the headman, who understood what damage such a gale might do to unprotected boats, were lifting the several heavy craft, and placing them safely far up on the bank, also taking care that they should not lie broadside on to the river.

All these necessary preparations were being carried out swiftly, and with great care. None too

soon were they concluded, for hardly had the last boat been laid among the trees and bushes than a new sound came across the river to their ears.

"Listen to the wind, will you?" called out Ballyhoo, for it was necessary to raise one's voice now in order to be heard, because the thunder seemed almost constant, and other noises began to join in to make things "merry."

"I'm glad for one," said Jack, "that we're not out there in the middle of the river right now."

"Why, we'd founder, as sure as anything," Ballyhoo affirmed. "But owing to the little turn of this rocky shelf here I don't believe we'll get a great deal of the wind in this place. Whee! there it strikes along the other shore. Now it's racing across like wildfire. Hold your breath, boys, and listen to that row, will you?"

Almost before he ceased speaking there was a wild swoop, and they heard a tree crash down not far away, before the first violence of the gale.

From that time on speaking was almost impossible. All they could do was to cower there, and shield themselves the best way possible with their blankets; for as usually happens no sooner had the rain commenced to descend in a perfect deluge than the atmosphere quickly became chilly.

Ballyhoo could not help staring out, as though the wild spectacle possessed a peculiar fascination for him, so that he could not tear his eyes away. The lightning was really magnificent and



appalling. It came in many different types, from the zigzag blaze that seemed to dart this way and that before losing itself near the earth to a broad and terrible arrow that dropped directly down from the overhanging clouds, and sought some monarch of the forest, to shatter the same into fragments.

And such rain none of them had ever seen fall. It blotted out everything on the river, and even closer by; in fact, save for the intermittent flashes of lightning they could not see any object. Roaring torrents rushed past on every side, all heading toward the nearby river. Ballyhoo did not wonder that the Orinoco needed a dozen mouths, more or less, to let such floods seek an outlet to the sea, if rainfalls like this were of frequent occurrence along the extensive watershed it drained.

The war of the elements kept up for a long time, until it seemed as though they must become exhausted through their own savage violence. Then gradually the thunder lost some of its ear-splitting vigor, and the lightning came less frequently.

Encouraged by these signs, the boys began to pluck up hope, and believe the terrible gale was wearing out.

They also realized that they would have to put in that night under the shelter of the rocky ledge, because everywhere else the earth must prove too wet for any comfort. This did not promise a comfortable time, because the ground was hard, but even Ballyhoo made no complaint. He knew when

he was well off, and that rocky shelf stood in the light of a good friend in his estimation.

The thunder was hardly more than a loud growl finally, though an occasional outburst would come once in a while, just to remind them of what they had missed. So passed another strange experience that they were not likely to soon forget.

The Indians had started a little blaze under the rocks. They were not as comfortably clad as the whites, and the ponchos they owned had to serve as cloaks by day and blankets by night, so they could not be very heavy. The poor fellows had been shivering with the cold for some little time before they summoned energy enough to apply at match to the dry stuff some of them had made out to fetch along before the rain began to fall.

And that flickering little blaze continued to rise and fall during the whole of the night. Somehow it seemed a bit of comfort, for Ballyhoo at least, because everything looked so dark and forbidding outside, the clouds continuing to dominate the heavens long after the storm had passed out of hearing.

Again all of them were glad when morning broke. It seemed as though this might be getting to be a regular thing, with them; at least Ballyhoo considered that it was, in his particular case. Since that night when he sat between two camp fires and watched for the coming of jaguars, anacondas, alligators, and all sorts of other "var-

mints" which had their domain in the forest and swamps of the Orinoco country, the boy believed he had hardly passed a single peaceful night.

All of them felt pretty stiff and sore when they began to crawl forth from under the rocky ledge; but there was some satisfaction when they contemplated the fact of possessing dry clothes, and that their packages too had escaped being soaked in that tropical downpour.

It was no easy task to find suitable wood for a cooking fire, but then Ballyhoo had learned how to cut into stumps, and secure the heart, which would be found perfectly dry, even after a week of rain; and this he now proceeded to do.

"At one time, Ballyhoo," remarked Jack, while they were getting breakfast ready, "you spoke of our being able to find some sort of shelter under one of these big trees, if it came to the worst; you remember that, don't you? Well, just take a look over there, and say what you think about that now."

Ballyhoo did look and gave a startled cry.

"Why!" he exclaimed, "lightning must have struck that monster tree, and shattered it all the way down. Only the wreck is left, a broken stump thirty feet high, and even that split nearly in two. I remember when that must have happened, for the flash nearly made me blind, and the report was so awful the rocks trembled under me. Yes, I'm mighty glad now I didn't have to

carry out my plan. It would have been a crazy one, I own up."

"Anywhere but under a big tree in a thunder storm," continued Jack, feeling that just then was the right time to impress such a valuable bit of advice on the rash comrade, when such a splendid object lesson could be shown in the matter of the riven forest monarch. "I'd throw myself flat in a field, and take the ducking every time, rather than do that, or seek shelter in a hay barn. A hedge, or a rock that tilts over are all right, for they never attract the lightning."

"Oh! I'll be sure to remember, Jack," the other promised; but it was always a question whether one so forgetful as Ballyhoo could keep anything in mind.

As the boats had been carefully turned upside down they had not been lifted and carried away by the hurricane force of the wind. Consequently they were in good condition for launching, and this duty was attended to by the headman and his numerous assistants, after which the cargoes were again stowed away, in the bows for the most part.

"I have just been figuring it out, boys," announced the professor over his third cup of strong coffee, of which he was excessively fond; "and I believe, if all goes well, we should some time this afternoon arrive at the point where we first struck the Orinoco."

"Do we return the same way as we came, sir?" asked Jack.



"That, too, I have been considering," the gentleman explained, "and on the whole decided it would be better to retrace our course. We know what to expect on that stream, whereas if we continue to move down the Orinoco there may be hazards without number that will confront us. And seeing that three among our party are particularly anxious to get back to civilization without any sort of a spill, it seems to me we would show good sense by repeating."

In fact there was not a single dissenting vote cast, even the usually adventurous Ballyhoo having apparently seen enough trouble for some time to come.

That was one of the finest days they saw on the entire cruise. It seemed as though the great storm must have cleared the air, for that sickening heat was entirely missing now, and in its place they had a fine bracing breeze that kept up the entire day.

Just as the head of the expedition had said, they reached the junction of the two rivers a couple of hours before sundown. It was determined to go into camp then and there, since a good site offered, and they wished to spend just one more night within reach of where the mighty Orinoco rolled its turgid current toward the distant ocean.

As they were about landing Jack called out excitedly:

"Look, fellows, at that monster alligator just getting ready to plunge into the river. There

he goes with a splash. He's likely got a den under the bank, with one entrance far down below the water."

"Tonight then is my chance to see how the Indians catch these 'gators for their scaly hides," said Ballyhoo, "because the headman promised to set a trap to show me."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE ALLIGATOR TRAP

"A TRAP for alligators, did you say?" exclaimed Jack, with an immediate show of eagerness; "that sounds interesting. I wonder now if there would be anything in it for me."

"If you mean that you'd like to get a few snaps, try and find out from old Mr. Woo what he thinks. He's seen how you work your magic box, and could give me a few pointers. And say, mebbe it might make a pretty nifty show that would cause the kids' eyes to stick out when they saw the old saurian nabbed as neat as you please. Stay here, boys, and I'll try and interview our headman."

With that Ballyhoo slipped away and was soon seen making all manner of queer gestures with his hands and fingers, as well as motions with his head. It was quite a task to hold any lengthy conversation with the old Indian who acted as "boss of the outfit;" though he could talk fairly well on such subjects as concerned the ordinary matters connected with starting the day's work, camping, and always the prime subject of "grub."

Ballyhoo had, however, been working indus-

triously with the old chap, and believed he had originated a sort of "pidgin" language which, when accompanied by the proper amount of shrugs and smiles and nods could be understood by both parties.

None of them could ever pronounce the Indian's real name, and among them he was spoken of as "Mr. Woo." It did not matter at all to the headman, for he would answer to any name at all, if only he caught the speaker's eye, and could see how his lips moved.

After a little while Ballyhoo once more joined his companions. If the grin on his face served as a barometer to indicate success or failure, then he evidently had accomplished all he set out to do.

"Jack, he thinks you could manage it with some hope of making a good picture, if only that light of yours turns out decent for the night work. The first part he's ready to start into right away, and there'll be plenty of sunlight for that; so hurry up and get your camera out of its sack."

"Oh! I did all that while you were talking with the guide," asserted the young photographer calmly. "I'm ready any time he says the word."

"Then come along and we'll get him going," Ballyhoo went on. "There ought to be nearly an hour of the sunlight still, to work with; and what's more, we happen to be on the right side of the river to get its full benefit."

Of course Jack knew this well, without being told. Long experience had made him a good judge of conditions, and in this way he was saved from



using up much of his precious film unprofitably; though accidents would some times happen, as they do "in even the best regulated families."

The headman took a couple of his understrappers with him, perhaps because he thought they would help make the picture more realistic. Three Indians, with their picturesque attire, would be far better than merely a single native. Jack was of that opinion himself, and made no effort to cut down the number on the score of unnecessary representation.

First the headman closely examined the shore about the place where the big saurian had made his plunge. It could be easily seen that he had a favorite sunning spot, where he might detect any approaching peril, and be ready to take a dip, turning up in his slanting den, where it would be easy for him to remain until the coast was clear again.

Nearly all alligators, as well as their first cousins the crocodiles, have their "dens" with one entrance far under the surface of the water, then a slope upwards, and an exit hidden in some clump of bushes, back from the stream. Near this latter door the shrewd hunter after tiny 'gators looks to rake in his prizes, to be afterwards, perhaps, sold as curios in Florida stores.

Having located the reptile's "house," the headman signaled that he was ready to begin business; so Jack got busy with his crank, while Oscar and Ballyhoo stood ready to render any assistance the Indian might require; meaning possibly to also

ret in the picture so their story of having been on the spot would be proven beyond the shadow of a doubt.

With his machete the Indian first of all cleaned off all the small twigs and side shoots connected with a stout young sapling growing conveniently just where he wanted it to be. He tested this, and apparently found it springy enough to suit his purpose.

Presently this was carefully bent over until it formed a perfect arch. Oscar saw what the alligator trap was going to be. Indeed, he himself had snared rabbits more than a few times in the same way. There was nothing new about it, only that catching such big game as a twelve or fourteen foot 'gator might be looked upon as something novel.

The end of the springy and bent sapling was fastened in a crotch connected with the top of a stout stake driven deep into the ground. Then a slip noose was made from a piece of tarred rope, and the snare laid. This noose was resting on several other stakes so that it would have to be entered in order that the bait be taken.

All the while he worked at this the headman was cautioned by Ballyhoo not to come between his job and the camera; this of course was necessary in order to get a good picture concerning the actual manipulation of the snare part.

When a little later the bait was placed just where it could not be reached by a crawling saurian without the snout and fore part of the rep-

tile's body passing through the noose, the trap was pronounced set. When the 'gator, having thrust himself partly through the noose, tried to push on further, the chances were three out of four that he would jerk the bent sapling free from confinement, with the result that the noose would tighten, and the 'gator be raised a foot or two from the ground. Here he would be helpless to effect his own release, and must swing and struggle in midair until the setter of the trap came along to secure his prize.

After having managed the preliminaries of this strange native way of capturing the wearer of "corrugated sheet-iron armor," as Ballyhoo called the thick, rough skin of the alligator, Jack rested on his laurels. Later on if luck came their way he would like to get the prisoner dangling there. Then the illustration of a saurian creeping up toward the trap could easily be taken after the reptile had been dispatched.

It was perhaps along about three in the morning, as Ballyhoo decided after seeing the position of the various planets in the heavens, that someone aroused the boy by a soft shake. Opening his eyes he saw an Indian bending over him, and was for the moment startled, since he had been dreaming of those savage men whom they had frightened away by the use of the professor's "magic."

"Oh! it's only you, Mr. Woo, is it?" muttered Ballyhoo; "what's happened?"

"He come trap," the other told him, not without a little streak of natural triumph in his voice.

Ballyhoo sat up and stopped rubbing his eyes. Indeed, all the sleep seemed to have suddenly left his blinking orbs.

"Do you mean the big 'gator?" he asked hurriedly.

"So him," the other informed him, cheerfully nodding in the affirmative.

"Wait till I get Jack and Oscar then, and we'll step over to see what's what," and with these words Ballyhoo crept across the strip of ground that lay between his sleeping place and that occupied by his two partners.

"What's gone wrong now, Ballyhoo?" asked a quiet voice.

"Oh! are you awake then, Oscar?" blurted out the creeper. "Why, Mr. Woo tells me the 'gator has entered the trap. Jack ought to know, so as to try and get him as he is, fast in the toils."

The sound of his voice must have aroused Jack, because the other was a light sleeper as a rule. He, too, asked what was wanted, and on hearing lost no time in reaching out for his ready camera, already mounted on the tripod, and prepared for "business."

"The headman says we've caught our 'gator, Jack," the excited Ballyhoo told him, "so come along, and see what you can do with that flash-light arrangement you rigged up. You can make another try again in the morning, if we choose to let him stay there in the noose."

By now the whole camp was astir, the Indians having taken more or less interest in the enter-



prise, which had doubtless been duly exploited by "Mr. Woo," with himself figuring in the principal rôle.

Already the headman, bearing a torch from the fire, was on the spot, and thither the balance of them flocked. It was a queer spectacle that the Motion Picture Comrades looked upon. The monster alligator, at least fourteen feet in length, had crawled up on the bank, attracted by the bait placed there for that purpose. He had passed partly through the waiting noose in attempting to reach the food, and his violent tugs had drawn the notched sapling free from the peg, so that it suddenly flew back to an almost upright position.

The reptile had been caught just back of its short and crooked forelegs, and was partly raised, so that only his tail now rested on solid ground, though his hind legs now and then scraped along the surface without finding any support.

When the boys arrived on the spot the 'gator was struggling furiously to release himself from the encircling rope, but it chanced to be too strong to break, despite the strain put upon it.

"Whoo! what a terror!" ejaculated Ballyhoo, staring at the squirming reptile. He had taken the precaution to carry his gun with him, which would indicate that Ballyhoo did not wholly trust that frail rope. If the enraged 'gator should break loose and attack them he wanted to be in condition to wind up the creature's career with a shot.

Jack lost no time in getting busy. He had al-

ready doubtless arranged in his mind just the sort of picture he wanted to take, for he commenced giving the headman orders to herd his men to one side. Here the Indians could be seen craning their necks, and trying to watch all that went on, making a most effective background for the scene, and truly typical of the Orinoco country.

"Do you want us in it?" asked Ballyhoo.

"Everybody has to work to make this a success," Jack told him, "so move over to that side; and, Oscar, you stand yonder. Professor, we'd like to have you in focus as if you were bossing the job, while Mr. Jenks can be helping me with the flashlight pan."

After everything had been arranged Jack ordered the torch to be extinguished. A minute later there was heard the winding of the camera crank, and then came a brilliant flash, although this intense white light burned much longer than usual. After it died out Ballyhoo gave a little whoop.

"I should think you'd get something decent out of that job, Jack!" he observed; while the headman hurried over to get another brand from the fire, and dispel the gloom that had fallen on the scene.

Jack appeared satisfied with his work.

"It'll show the beast twisting about, to prove that he's alive, and not a dummy set in the trap for effect," he told them, as he gathered up camera and tripod, and turned to go back to where they had been sleeping.

"I should think such a scene would prove very interesting to everybody," ventured the professor; "and especially to any boys in an audience. I know that when I was a mere lad my eyes would have been as round as saucers if I'd ever had the chance to see such a thing. And I never cease to marvel at the wonderful advance in photography the present generation is experiencing. Old-time still life scenes have lost all their interest for people since the coming of the motion pictures. They are one of the wonders of the twentieth century.

In the morning it was found that the big 'gator was still full of life. Under ordinary conditions the boys would have surely disposed of the reptile at once, or else let him go free again, for they did not believe in giving unnecessary suffering to any creature; but the case was different now for Jack wished to duplicate his work of midnight so as to protect himself against possible failure.

After that had been done the alligator was disposed of by a shot from Ballyhoo's gun; because he thought he would like to have that skin for the purpose of wearing a pair of slippers at some future date made from the hide. The obliging headman performed the autopsy for him, and for many days that same hide was a source of more or less annoyance to every one in camp. But in the end Ballyhoo brought it triumphantly home with him.

At present writing it is supposed to be in the hands of a tanner, who will return it ready for use. Ballyhoo apparently believes it to be almost inexhaustible, to judge from the various

promises of calling-card cases, traveling bags, slippers, and writing pads which he so generously scattered among his girl friends in Melancton.

All of which is, of course, away ahead of my story, for Ballyhoo was not yet out of the Orinoco forests at the time; and if he only knew it had a number of rather unpleasant experiences still to pass through before he could call himself safe.



## CHAPTER XIX

“NOTHING BUT TROUBLE FOR BALLYHOO!”

ONCE they left the great Orinoco behind them the boys felt that they were well launched on their return trip. They could now afford to review some of the stirring happenings of the past, and speculate on what might have befallen them had the conditions been different.

Especially did this refer to their narrow escape from being attacked by those rabid white marauders whom the clever artifice of Professor Yardley had frightened off.

In their first camp after losing sight of the big river the boys talked this all over, and decided that they had much to be thankful for.

“Everything seems to have come our way,” Oscar told his chums. “The professor is delighted with his collection of plants; Philip Jenks has picked up twice as many rare specimens of birds as he hoped to find; and as for our crowd, we’ve certainly secured a mighty fine lot of pictures calculated to please the people we’re working for.”

“That’s right,” Jack hastened to declare, en-

thusiastically. "Never were fellows more fortunate than we've been in everything we've undertaken so far. There was our series of circus stunts, showing just how life went with the company connected with a 'Big Round-top,' not only so far as the performance went, but the daily grind, the queer happenings that marked their railroad travel, the training of animals, the putting up and taking down of the monster tent, and a dozen other things that up to now the general public never understood. It's said to be an education in itself."

"Don't forget our Wild Animal Series of films which we took out there in the heart of Africa," spoke up Ballyhoo, who was busy assorting his fish lines, since he professed to be hungry for another "feed" from the river. "Thousands of people have gone almost crazy with delight watching those great beasts in action, right in their regular haunts in the jungle and forests."

"Yes," added Oscar, "and I'm sure that when our Under the Sea pictures are flashed on the screen we'll have a shout go up across the whole country, because I believe there are some wonderful things shown there that'll make people sit up and take notice. Then the idea of recovering lost treasure always grips the imagination of nine out of ten boys and men, because, like the rest of us, they've dreamed many times of doing that same thing."

"Who hasn't?" called out Ballyhoo, with a laugh. "I wager now I've spent Captain Kidd's

ill-gotten hoard as many as six times, when I was younger. I always dreamed of finding an old cedar, brass-bound chest buried on a lonely sand key in the Gulf of Mexico, and that it was crammed to the brim with diamonds and Spanish gold. Little did I think that I'd really go hunting for a bunch of that same Spanish gold, and in a modern submarine diving-boat at that; yes, and find it too."

With that Ballyhoo hurried over to the river bank, where he had located a tree that hung far out over the water, and perched on which he could fish to his heart's content.

"Better be careful you don't slip, Ballyhoo!" called out Jack, a little while later, on noticing for the first time where the other had located.

"Oh, shucks! nothing doing in that line!" the other boasted. "I've got an old stub of a broken branch back of me to hold to. Did you see that last dandy chap I tossed ashore, Jack? Must have weighed all of three pounds, and a fighter from away back. These fish are gamey enough to be called bass, for all the water is so luke-warm mostly."

"They run down to the sea from time to time, I imagine," explained the professor, "just as the trout do in many streams up in Canada and Newfoundland. That appears to give them fresh life and vigor."

Ballyhoo continued fishing, with more or less luck. It was perhaps a quarter of an hour afterwards that those in camp heard a tremendous

plash. Jack and Oscar did not have to be told that in spite of his brave words the unfortunate Ballyhoo must have made some unexpected move, and losing his balance, had fallen into the river.

It was not so very deep where he had been fishing, and as Ballyhoo could swim of course the chances of his being drowned seemed *nil*; nevertheless all of them hastened toward the shore, perhaps to laugh, or it might be to extend a helping hand to the unfortunate.

Ballyhoo himself was grinning as he turned to look up at the row of faces. He could take a joke, even when it happened to be upon himself, and doubtless the absurdity of the situation appealed to him.

Then like a flash his look changed. They saw him begin to jump up and down as though in sudden agony.

"Wow! quit that, can't you? Oh! what's hitting me that awful way? Jack, Oscar, somebody reach me out a hand, can't you? Ouch! that was a fierce drive! It's nearly killing me every time I feel it!"

"He's been touched by an electric eel!" shouted the professor. "Don't anybody jump in and try to help him, or you'll only get in trouble yourselves. Here, reach out with that pole, Oscar. Let him take hold of that, and we'll pull him ashore all right without trouble!"

Ballyhoo seemed almost paralyzed, and incapable of stirring of his own volition, save that he



did manage to clutch the end of the pole just as a drowning boy might seize upon a straw.

They proceeded to draw him toward the bank and every now and then during his progress thither the boy would let out a dismal squawk as though he had received an additional touch from the strange creature native to this region, an animal of considerable size, possessed of the power to send a powerful magnetic shock on contact with any other living body.

So poor Ballyhoo was finally helped ashore where he sank down almost exhausted, and looking most forlorn. They could now work on him without fear of "catching the fever," as Ballyhoo himself expressed it later on. He gradually recovered, though in a trembling condition during the balance of the evening. And it might have been noticed that from that same hour Ballyhoo lost all taste for fishing. Those waters contained too varied an assortment of terrors to please him. He had tried them all, save the savage little fish prone to so ravenously attack anything that moved, and invaded their domain; and Ballyhoo drew the line there.

"I'd just like to know," he afterwards said while taking his ease alongside the camp-fire, with supper disposed of, "how many volts that electricity shot through my system. Why, if I'd committed some high crime like treason, and was condemned to the chair, I couldn't have had much more electricity sent across, it seemed to me. It was just awful, that's a fact. If you don't believe me try

dose of the same yourself. It's said to be good for rheumatism, you know. I ought to get a dozen of those same eels and take them north, to start a sanitarium with. People who haven't moved a leg for years would start right away to dance like they were crazy. It's a great scheme, boys; and I'll put it up to some institution when I get back home, if I ever do."

"Well, sometimes Jack and myself begin to doubt if that ever happens to you, old fellow," laughed Oscar; "because you seem to have such a weakness for getting into so many queer scrapes. But then you must have been born under a lucky star, Ballyhoo, for you always do manage to crawl out again, right-side up with care."

"It's better to be born lucky than rich, or good looking, Oscar," chuckled the other, at which his comrades laughed, knowing he was referring to them.

So another day passed, and good progress having been made they were considerably closer to their journey's end than when the sun arose on their last camp.

"Given four more days," ventured the professor, though he did not pretend to be much of a prophet, "and we ought to arrive at that small town at the mouth of the river. There we must await the coming of a boat that will take us over to Maracaibo or La Guaira, the seaport of Caracas, from either of which places we can get passage to the States, because coffee steamers are going every once in so often."

That night was fated to be another which would be marked with white stones, on account of unexpected events coming to pass. No one was really to blame on this occasion, because it was only a chance that the thing happened.

They had found a very good spot for a camp, and congratulated themselves as the time came for retiring that there did not seem to be any prospect of another storm striking them; also the fact that in this part of the country, the headman had given them to understand such Indians as they might run across would be found friendly, because they were of his own tribe.

Consequently all of them were in usually fine spirits during the entire evening. Ballyhoo had entirely recovered from his dose of electricity, and could now afford to join in the laugh whenever the circumstance was recalled. He even wished Jack might have thought to snatch up his camera and get him standing there, unable to take the first step toward the bank unassisted.

"I'd just like to see how fiercely I did shake," was the way Ballyhoo explained his odd wish. "You can talk to me about the ague, but I warrant I had everything beat to a frazzle whenever that silly old eel rubbed up against me, and let go a dose of his stored-up stuff."

Later on the camp became silent save for the stentorian breathing of some sleeper who persisted in lying on his back as he slumbered. The boys had rigged up the individual mosquito nets each of them carried, for the little pests seemed worse

than usual; and under these they were taking solid comfort.

There was no warning given of what was coming. Jack heard a sudden yell, and on hastily sitting up, disentangling himself as best he could from his net, caught a strange heavy thumping that made him think of the old bull rhinoceros that once charged them when over in the Dark Continent.

He was fumbling for his camera the first thing, because that was his most precious possession, when to his horror he heard Ballyhoo's voice. It came from beyond the border of the camp, and directly in line with those strange pounding sounds. Ballyhoo could, when he was excited, let out a roar that might be heard a mile or more; and plainly he must be in that condition now.

"Help! help! he's carrying me off! Oscar, Jack, hurry up and stop him, won't you?" was what came floating back to the ears of the astonished campers, all of whom were by this time on their feet.



## CHAPTER XX

### SUCCESS ALL AROUND—CONCLUSION

OSCAR was ducking back for his rifle. His first horrified thought when he heard that despairing shout from Ballyhoo was that some wild beast like a jaguar had invaded the camp and carried the other off as his prey. Such things were not uncommon over there in Africa, even as in India man-eating tigers often drag men and children away from their own homes.

“It must be that a tapir charged the camp!” he heard Professor calling; and although this relieved his mind somewhat, still Oscar groped around until he had found not only his gun but that of Ballyhoo as well.

“Get torches, some of you boys!” the professor was ordering; and understanding what was meant the headman thrust lighted brands into the hands of several of his men, also securing a burning splinter of wood for himself.

“This way,” continued the man of science; “I can still hear the beast making off through the thick growth. If it is a tapir this will be the first time I ever knew one to rush a camp. It is most

unusual, for they are not reckoned fierce or vindictive, any more than a big hog would be."

The others were close at his heels, while the Indians kept waving their lights in a fantastic manner as they pushed on ahead. All were straining their eyes in the endeavor to glimpse any moving object beyond. The course taken by the animal could be easily followed, for the grass and bushes had pressed down.

Fainter still came the sounds, though the shouts had ceased. Oscar and Jack were beginning to feel panicky in regard to the safety of their poor chum.

"Whatever could have happened to Ballyhoo?" Jack was saying, as he ducked under a tree that had low-hanging branches. "And if it was only a tapir how could it carry him off when it dashed through our camp? I'd give a heap to see the poor old chap just now, for a fact."

"Well, just turn your eyes up and you'll glimpse him, all right," came in a voice that thrilled them.

Something moved amidst the branches of the big tree, and then they saw the figure of Ballyhoo clinging there desperately, as though he had just managed to secure some sort of frail hold, and was maintaining it only through extreme difficulty.

"Look out below there, for I've got to let go, and drop down!" the one aloft called out before either Jack or Oscar could recover from their surprise and make any sort of reply.

He immediately proved himself to be as good as his word, for he landed in a heap, sitting up

at once, and commencing to feel of his person after the manner of one who hardly knew whether his ribs were sound or not.

"Huh!" grunted Ballyhoo, since none of them seemed capable of saying anything, so great was their surprise, "guess I'm all serene, though I did think one of my slats had been fractured when I knocked up against a limb while riding on that hog's back!"

"What made you do that?" asked Jack. "Were you dreaming you belonged to Barley's Circus, and a champion bareback rider in the bargain?"

Ballyhoo scratched his head.

"Say, it's real hard for me to figure out just how it did happen," he admitted, with a dubious shake of his head and a grimace that was comical. "Let's see if I can place things. I remember dreaming that a whole herd of elephants was chasing after me over in Africa. Then I sat up, and something was booming straight down toward the camp, making a queer grunting noise, too, just like we heard those big tuskers do when we watched the pond where they came to cool off."

"Yes, go on, Ballyhoo," urged Oscar, when the other paused as if to catch his breath.

"Course I was a *little* rattled," confessed the other. "I scrambled up, and then started, only half awake, mind you, in the bargain, to climb the branch of the tree that was just over my head. And while I was getting up along came that old hog and brushed me right down on his back. The best I could do was to hold on like fun, and let

out a screech. Sure I thought at first it was a real elephant.”

“A most remarkable happening,” asserted the professor gravely. “It could not occur again, and was one chance out of ten thousand. You have had an extraordinary adventure, my son, believe me.”

“Oh! that’s nothing,” Ballyhoo told him, cheerily; “I’m always stumbling into the most astonishing and ridiculous things anybody could imagine. That seems to be my luck, to strike the unusual and the surprising. It’s a wonder I’m alive to tell the tale.”

“But how did you manage to get up in this tree?” asked Jack.

“Oh! that was easy enough,” came the answer. “I knew right away none of you fellows could reach me out a helping hand as you often do, and that unless I wanted to be kidnapped altogether it was up to me to get busy. So the next time I felt a branch brush against me I just launched myself up, and stuck! But my arms were beginning to get tired, and I hated to drop, because I didn’t know how far it was to the ground till your lights came along.”

“Well, if you’ve got your breath back again, Ballyhoo, suppose we return to the camp?” suggested the amused professor; who had turned his face aside several times in order to indulge in a broad smile, without hurting the boy’s feelings; though he should have known that Ballyhoo Jones was not the one to take offence at such a small thing as that.



"I guess this just about caps the climax of queer things I've had drop in on me," whined the boy, limping a little when making for the camp. "I certainly hope it's going to be the last, too, because I'm beginning to get tired of furnishing all the amusement for the crowd. I didn't bargain to be the clown when I joined the organization, though always ready to do my share of any old thing."

It was concluded that the tapir had not really intended to harm the campers when it rushed through at such headlong speed. Something must have occurred to frighten the unwieldy beast, and in plunging forward it had unintentionally invaded the camp. Then when Ballyhoo dropped on its back this circumstance only added to its terror, and served to increase its speed.

Outside of some unimportant scratches the boy had, with his customary good luck, come through his singular experience unharmed.

"But I'm glad, though," he told Jack during the following day, when they were talking across the dozen feet of water separating their boats, "that the darkness kept you from grabbing up your camera, and getting me hanging to that old tapir's back. I felt about like the daring boy that tries to stick on the back of a trick donkey at the circus; or the one that rides the greased pig at a county fair. I'm willing to try most anything *once*, but I draw the line at being kidnapped by a big hog with a snout."

The succeeding days and nights passed with-

out anything more of moment happening that would be worth a description. And, indeed, the boys had already encountered so many thrills that all of them were glad to have it so. There can be such a thing as too much excitement to please even a boy's adventure-loving heart.

In due time the expedition reached the town near the mouth of the Venezuela river, where they meant to stay until accommodations could be secured aboard some small trading boat, bound for one of the larger cities in touch with the outside world.

But Oscar, Jack and Ballyhoo Jones did not really return home as soon as they intended, and their further adventures are related in the next book of this series.

THE END

*you have read me  
no, return me*

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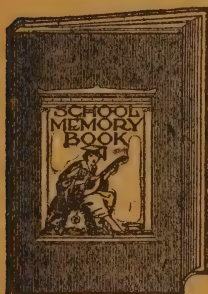
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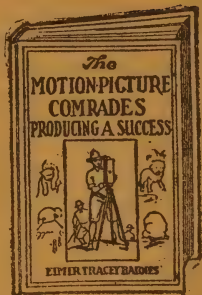
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